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 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.
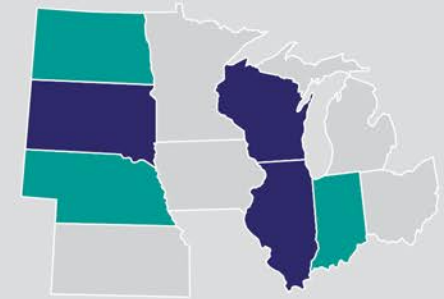
COMMIT TO ONGOING STUDY, OVERSIGHT

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,

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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

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@csg.org.