STATELINE MIDWEST

CSG MIDWEST

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# YEAR AHEAD MARKS HUGE SHIFT FOR STATES IN ADMINISTERING AND FUNDING MEDICAID

## Challenges include enforcing work requirements, planning for new fiscal constraints

by Tim Anderson *(tanderson@csg.org)*

In May, Nebraska will become the first state to implement provisions in a 2025 federal law that mark one of the biggest changes in the 61-year history of Medicaid: requiring some enrollees to participate in work-related activities.

Across the country, minus a state securing a "good faith" extension waiver, these work requirements will take effect in January 2027. They apply to the public health insurance program's "expansion population" — low-income, able-bodied adults between the ages of 19 and 64.

They also mean new obligations for states.

And in the not-so-distant future, there will be added fiscal responsibilities and restraints for states under the federal law (HR 1 of 2025), especially among the 40 that have expanded Medicaid eligibility. For example, many states have come to rely on provider taxes to help finance their share of Medicaid; federal constraints on this revenue source either have taken effect or will do so soon.


"HR 1 is going to require action, much sooner than later, even if some of these provisions don't take effect for a while," says Edwin Park, a research professor at the Georgetown University McCourt School of Public Policy's Center for Children and Families.

"[States] can't just wait until the last second to think how to deal with some of the federal revenue or the taxes going away or some of the implementation costs. They're going to have to think now about what their revenues and spending look like over time."

### BIG SHIFT: TRENDS IN MEDICAID ELIGIBILITY AND SPENDING

Nationwide, the number of people eligible for Medicaid has increased considerably over the past decade and a half as the result of actions taken by state legislators, governors and/or voters.

Since congressional passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2010, states have had the option of extending Medicaid coverage to non-disabled adults with incomes of up to 138 percent of the federal poverty level and getting an enhanced federal funding match (currently 90 percent).

Most states have taken up the federal government on this offer.

In the Midwest, Medicaid expansion is now a decade or more old in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota and Ohio. The expansions in Nebraska and South Dakota are more recent; they also were the result of voter-approved ballot measures rather than legislative action.

In Illinois, Rep. Anna Moeller says, uninsured rates fell 44 percent and hospitals saw a 37 percent reduction in uncompensated care immediately after the change in her state.

Across all 50 states, the expansion population now makes up about one-quarter of all Medicaid enrollees, KFF data show (see map on this page for percentages for the Midwest). In 2024, one in five Americans reported getting health insurance through Medicaid.

According to the National Association of State Budget Officers, as of fiscal year 2024, 30 percent of state spending — states' own dollars, plus federal revenue — was on Medicaid; that compares to 22 percent in FY 2010, prior to expansions under the Affordable Care Act.

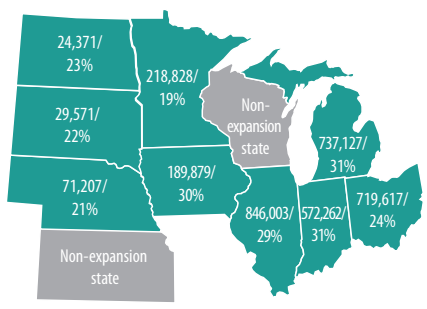
HR 1 has the potential of changing these numbers and trends.

### NEW ERA: DETAILS ON MEDICAID WORK REQUIREMENTS

With the exceptions of Kansas and Wisconsin, all Midwestern states have adopted the Medicaid expansion. They must administer the new federal work

COVER STORY CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

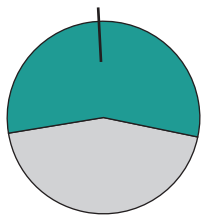
### # OF ADULTS ENROLLED IN MEDICAID AS RESULT OF AFFORDABLE CARE ACT EXPANSION/EXPANSION ENROLLMENT AS % OF TOTAL MEDICAID ENROLLMENT



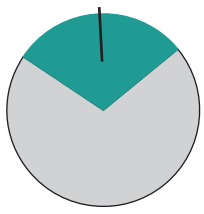

*Source: KFF (using December 2024 data from U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services)*

### MEDICAID AND STATE BUDGETS (FY 2024)

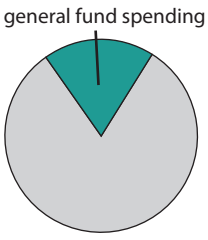
Accounts for 56.1% of state spending of federal funds



Accounts for 29.8% of total state spending



Accounts for 18.7% of state general fund spending



*Source: National Association of State Budget Officers*

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

This page provides a snapshot of trends in health costs and spending. Please contact CSG Midwest's Tim Anderson at *tanderson@csg.org* if you questions about the data or state health policy. He is The Council of State Governments' staff liaison to the Midwestern Legislative Conference Health and Human Services Committee, whose officers are Illinois Rep. Anna Moeller and South Dakota Rep. Taylor Rehfeldt, co-chairs; and Iowa Rep. Brett Barker, vice chair.

# HEALTH INSURANCE: How individuals are covered and how much it costs

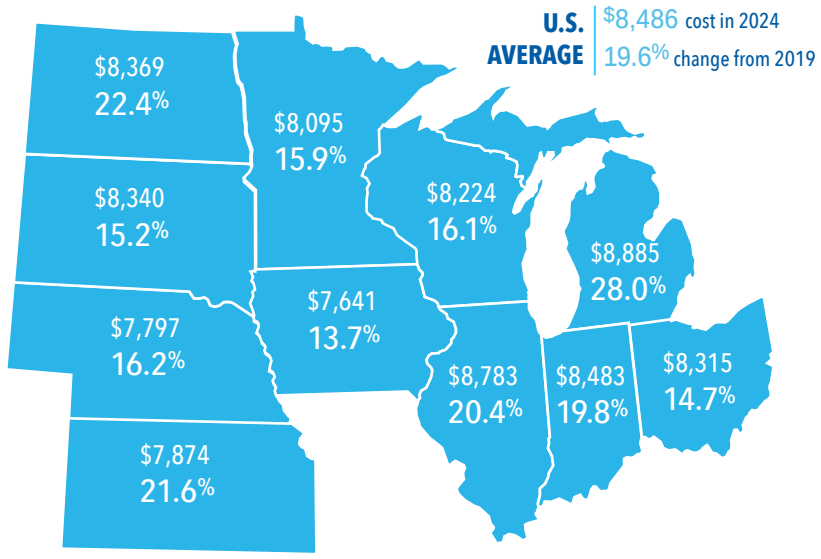
**6.5%** Expected increase in 2026 in total health benefit costs, per employee, in employer-sponsored health plans – largest yearly increase since 2010.

*Source: Mercer 2025 National Survey of Employer-Sponsored Health Plans*

**26%** Estimated increase from 2025 to 2026 in amount that health insurers will charge for coverage on Affordable Care Act marketplaces (increase does not include higher costs for enrollees if federal government's enhanced premium tax credits expire)

*Source: KFF*

## COST OF EMPLOYER-BASED COVERAGE: *Average annual premium for individual employee in 2024 and % increase in cost from 2019*




Premium costs are split: 79%, employer, and 21%, employee, nationwide

*Source: KFF*

## HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE *estimates by state: 2024*

People can be covered by more than one type of health insurance during the year; as a result, estimates by type of coverage are not mutually exclusive and add up to more than 100 percent in each state.

| STATE | EMPLOYER-BASED* | DIRECT PURCHASE◊ | MEDICAID | MEDICARE | MILITARY‡ | UNINSURED |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ILLINOIS | 59.2% | 12.5% | 18.9% | 18.3% | 2.7% | 6.9% |
| INDIANA | 56.6% | 12.6% | 20.6% | 18.8% | 3.8% | 7.5% |
| IOWA | 57.6% | 16.0% | 19.1% | 19.5% | 4.1% | 5.4% |
| KANSAS | 58.9% | 16.2% | 13.4% | 18.9% | 6.5% | 8.5% |
| MICHIGAN | 59.4% | 12.8% | 22.5% | 21.2% | 3.2% | 5.1% |
| MINNESOTA | 60.1% | 16.1% | 18.1% | 18.7% | 3.8% | 5.1% |
| NEBRASKA | 57.4% | 17.1% | 15.4% | 18.1% | 6.6% | 7.1% |
| NORTH DAKOTA | 60.9% | 20.7% | 11.6% | 18.1% | 7.0% | 6.1% |
| OHIO | 57.2% | 12.1% | 20.4% | 20.2% | 4.0% | 6.7% |
| SOUTH DAKOTA | 54.6% | 19.0% | 13.4% | 19.7% | 8.3% | 8.1% |
| WISCONSIN | 59.7% | 15.4% | 17.2% | 20.6% | 3.9% | 5.3% |
| UNITED STATES | 54.6% | 14.1% | 20.5% | 18.9% | 5.1% | 8.2% |

Among all 50 states, North Dakota had the highest percentage of residents receiving private-based health coverage.

Four of the 10 U.S. states with the lowest percentage of residents receiving health insurance through Medicaid are in the Midwest: North Dakota (second-lowest); Kansas and South Dakota (tied for fifth-lowest); and Nebraska (eighth-lowest). In six U.S. states – none in the Midwest – more than one-quarter of people reported receiving health insurance through Medicaid.

States with the lowest uninsured rates are concentrated in the Northeast. Massachusetts had the lowest uninsured rate: 2.8%. Michigan and Minnesota (tied for seventh), along with Wisconsin (10th), were among the 10 U.S. states with the lowest rates of uninsured in 2024. Conversely, Texas (16.7%) and Georgia (12.0%) had the highest percentage of residents saying they had no coverage.

* Coverage via employer-based insurance varies widely among the 50 U.S. states – anywhere from a high of 63.5 percent in Utah to a low of 43.3 percent in New Mexico. Every Midwestern state eclipsed the U.S. average in 2024. State-by-state variations are caused by factors such as the composition of businesses in each state (insurance is more likely to be provided by larger firms), industry composition and unionization, according to the U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.

◊ Direct purchase includes insurance bought by a consumer via the federal Health Insurance Marketplace as well as state-based marketplaces under the Affordable Care Act.

‡ Military-related health insurance includes coverage through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs or TRICARE.

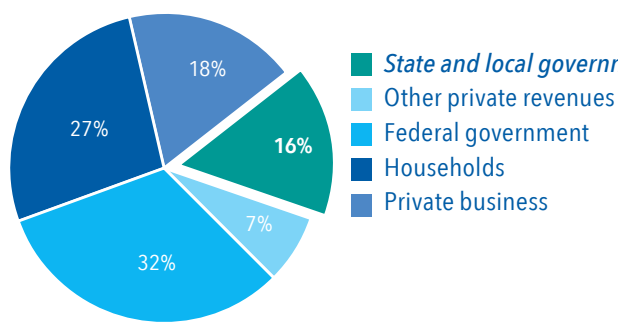
*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey*

# STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS: How much and what they spend on health

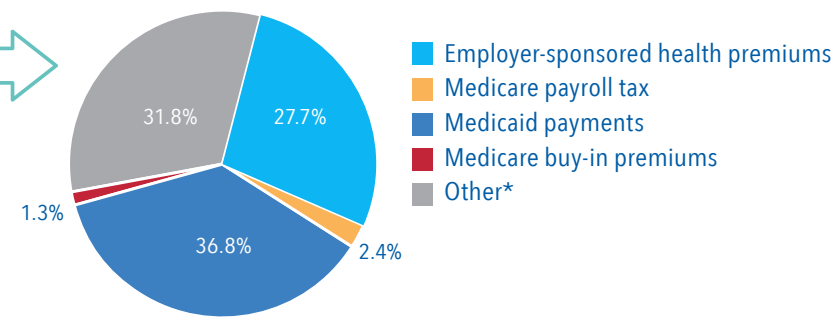
**$761.3 BILLION** Total amount of health spending by state and local governments in 2023.

**238.8%** Increase in health spending by state and local governments between 2000 and 2023. Over this time period, the cumulative inflation rate was 77.2%.

## SHARE OF TOTAL HEALTH SPENDING IN U.S. *(2023)*




## HEALTH SPENDING *by state and local governments (2023)*

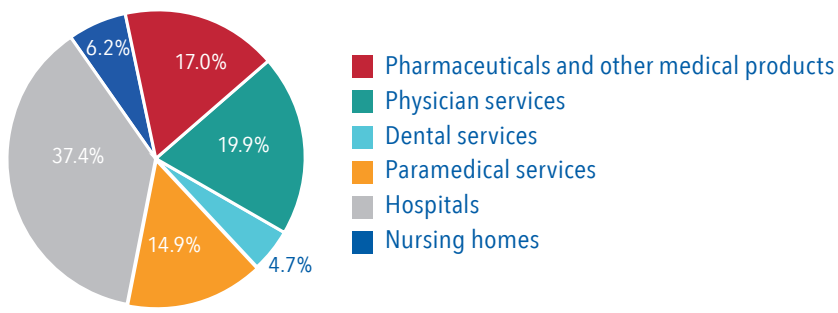



* Includes programs related to maternal and child health, public and general assistance, school health, children's health insurance, rehabilitation services, public health, and other health-related state and local initiatives and investments.

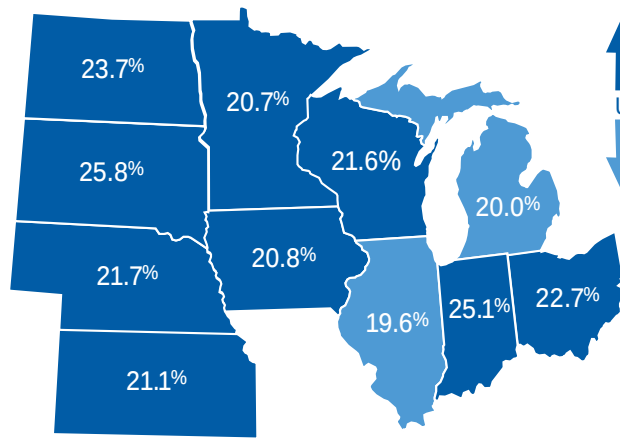
*Source of data for both pie charts: U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services*

# U.S. HEALTH SPENDING: Its part of the economy and how the money is spent

## BREAKDOWN OF HEALTH CARE-RELATED SPENDING IN THE U.S.




## HEALTH SPENDING *as % of total personal consumption expenditures, 2024**




* To calculate health spending's share of total personal consumption expenditures, these six categories were used: 1) pharmaceuticals and other medical products; 2) physician services; 3) dental services; 4) paramedical services; 5) hospitals; and 6) nursing homes.

*Source for data in map and pie chart: CSG Midwest calculations of U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis data*

# FEDERAL LAW WILL HAVE FAR-REACHING IMPACT ON MEDICAID EXPANSION POPULATIONS, STATES

» CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

requirements starting by early 2027. (Wisconsin also may have to comply because of coverage it provides via a federal waiver.)

In an announcement of Nebraska's first-in-the-nation implementation (set to begin in May), Steve Corsi, CEO of the state Department of Health and Human Services, hailed the change as a way of "encouraging greater economic and social participation."

"Employment provides financial stability, fosters personal growth, and will help Nebraska's small businesses in need of workers," he said.

Similar sentiments, along with concerns about rising Medicaid costs, led some state legislatures to approve work requirements prior to enactment of HR 1. That includes Indiana (SB 2 of 2025), Iowa (SF 615 of 2025) and Ohio (HB 33 of 2023). South Dakota voters approved a ballot measure in 2024.

Actual implementation, however, will be new to all states in this region.

Outside the Midwest, a few states have carried out their own Medicaid work requirements, and those experiences point to a big challenge ahead: enforcing the federal rules while minimizing coverage losses among Medicaid-eligible individuals in the expansion population.

In Arkansas, Park says, "people who should have been exempted from the work requirement or who met the work requirement" still lost coverage due to obstacles in reporting and documenting eligibility. In Georgia, "most of the lower-than-expected enrollment [in a Medicaid expansion] has been attributed to red tape associated with the work requirements."

## MANY EXEMPTIONS, ELIGIBILITY PATHWAYS IN FEDERAL LAW

Under HR 1, individuals in the expansion population must show they have worked 80 hours per month or, alternatively, have participated in job training, education programs or community service. States must verify compliance when an individual applies for Medicaid, as well as redetermine eligibility at least once every six months.

The federal law provides a host of exemptions from this work requirement — for those who are medically frail, disabled veterans, pregnant women, parents and guardians of children up to age 13, caregivers for disabled individuals, recently incarcerated individuals, and people receiving treatment for a substance-use disorder.

States also can provide a "short-term hardship exception" to residents of high-unemployment counties (a jobless rate of 8 percent or more or 1.5 times the national average).

"We know from data analysis that most individuals subject to the work requirements may already be working or may be eligible for some type of exemption," notes Robin Rudowitz, vice president at KFF and director of its Program on Medicaid and the Uninsured.

KFF found that, as of 2023, nearly two-thirds of Medicaid-covered adults between the ages of 19 and 64 were working. Among those not working, nearly three in 10 qualified for an exemption.

On paper, then, work requirements will be met or not apply to most individuals in the expansion population. However, the paperwork — the need for documentation and verification — can keep individuals from being enrolled in or remaining on Medicaid.

In Illinois, state health officials have told legislators that anywhere from 270,000 to 500,000 people in the state will lose Medicaid coverage as a result of the work requirements.

On the high side of the estimate, "that's about 15 percent of current enrollees," says Moeller, who is chair of the Illinois House Medicaid Subcommittee and co-chair of The Council of State Governments' Midwestern Legislative Conference Health & Human Services Committee.

"Just because people lose access doesn't mean they stop getting sick; those costs get shifted to hospitals and emergency rooms and clinics," she says. "Somebody has to end up paying for that care."

## HEAVY IMPLEMENTATION LIFT

Implementation of the work requirements, along with other rules related to compliance and more frequent checks on eligibility, is adding significant administrative burdens in Illinois, Moeller says. That includes a buildup of staff capacity, more communication and training with local partners, and upgrades in information technology.

As part of HR 1, $200 million is available for states to establish systems around the new work requirements.

"To the extent that states can make it easy for people, and do things like data matching and not make individuals produce documentation, that certainly will be helpful in maintaining coverage," Rudowitz says.

With data matching, states can automate at least the redetermination and renewal process. Information from other state benefit programs or workforce databases are accessed and eligibility proceeds *ex parte*, meaning enrollees don't need to provide documentation or fill out forms.

"There are a lot of system changes that need to happen to do that data matching," Rudowitz says. "No states are really set up right now to meet the new requirements. It's a challenge of systems, timing, lack of guidance, staff capacity, all of these things."

In an analysis for the first three months of 2025, Georgetown University researchers reviewed the share of renewals done *ex parte* in all states; percentages in the Midwest ranged from highs of 81.9 percent and 72.6 percent in Ohio and Minnesota, respectively, to lows of 17.2 percent and 17.3 percent in South Dakota and Nebraska, respectively.

"If a state is wanting to reduce the enrollment loss that otherwise would happen, you certainly want to make the system as automated as possible, with as little burden as possible on individuals and families," Park says.

He adds, though, that provisions in HR 1 might point states "in the opposite direction of that approach." Starting in October 2029, penalties will be imposed on states for erroneous payments or overpayments. The penalties apply to states with an error rate exceeding 3 percent.

"If you're a state looking ahead, you will want to be designing systems that minimize what the federal government perceives to be an eligibility error," Park says.

## NEW FISCAL RESTRAINTS

As HR 1 advanced through the U.S. Congress, one option considered, but not ultimately included, was to end the enhanced federal matching rate of 90 percent for the Affordable Care Act expansion. (The traditional federal match ranges from 50 percent to 77 percent, according to KFF.)

The enhanced match has made Medicaid expansion more fiscally (and politically) feasible in many states. States, too, have "trigger laws" that tie continuation of the Medicaid expansion to the enhanced rate.

Ohio included such a trigger in its latest budget (HB 96 of 2025). According to Georgetown's Center for Children and Families, three other Midwestern states have these trigger laws. Statutory language in Illinois and Indiana would end the expansion; Iowa's trigger provision provides "more flexibility" on the state response. South Dakotans will vote on a trigger law in November.

Illinois Rep. Anna Moeller

One sure new fiscal restraint coming to states under HR 1 is new limits on the use of provider taxes.

"Even though they are restrictions on state behavior," Park explains, "they produce savings [for the federal government] because the assumption is that states aren't going to be able to replace those lost revenues."

If a state spends less on Medicaid, the federal government has less to match.

Every state but Alaska imposes at least one of these provider taxes on hospitals, nursing homes, intermediate care facilities for individuals with disabilities, and/or managed-care organizations, according to the National Association of State Medicaid Directors.

Nationwide, provider taxes account for about 18 percent of the non-federal share of state Medicaid spending. State general funds make up nearly all of the remaining non-federal share, according to KFF.

Under HR 1, states cannot establish new provider taxes or increase the rates of existing ones. These restrictions cover all states, regardless of whether they expanded Medicaid.

Rudowitz notes that past practice in many states has been to raise or expand provider taxes during economic downturns, as a means of maintaining Medicaid coverage and provider payments when budgets are under duress and the availability of general funds is limited. This option no longer exists.

## SHRINKING PROVIDER TAXES

Another piece of HR 1 applies only to the Medicaid expansion states' use of provider taxes. For those states, the federal government will phase in stricter limits on what's known as the "safe harbor threshold."

"Safe harbor" refers to states being able to get a federal match of Medicaid dollars from revenue generated by the provider tax. Right now, the tax threshold is 6 percent of a provider's net patient revenue.

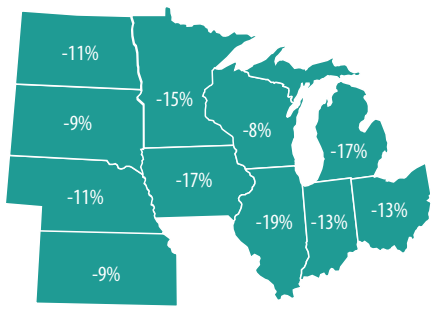
In expansion states, though, that threshold declines by half of a percentage point in each fiscal year starting in FY 2028 before reaching 3.5 percent in FY 2032. (Provider taxes on nursing homes and intermediate care facilities are exempt.)

A KFF analysis shows that seven Medicaid expansion states in the Midwest — Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska and Ohio — impose a provider tax on hospitals exceeding that 3.5 percent threshold. An Illinois provider tax on managed care organizations also is higher than 3.5 percent.

"There's a little bit of a lag on when these provisions go into effect," Rudowitz says, "but this is going to be a big issue for state budgets."

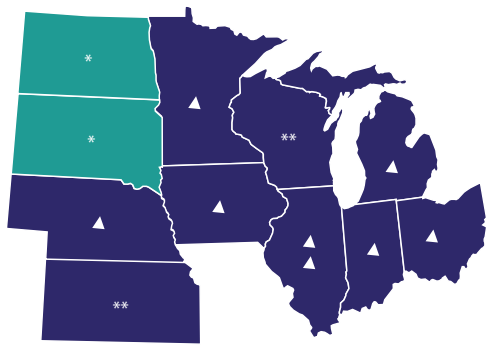
In Illinois, legislators have been told that HR 1 will result in a cumulative loss of $6.6 billion between FY 2028 and 2031 due to mandatory cutbacks in the provider tax and reduced federal support.

### ESTIMATED, 10-YEAR CHANGE IN FEDERAL MEDICAID SPENDING UNDER HR 1




*Source: KFF*

### MIDWEST STATES' USE OF PROVIDER TAXES TO HELP FINANCE SHARE OF MEDICAID SPENDING*




- State has three or more provider taxes
- State has one provider tax
- △ Medicaid expansion state where one provider tax will have to be cut under rules of 2025 federal law (lower "safe harbor limit" of 3.5% of net patient revenues by FY 2032)
- △△ Medicaid expansion state where two provider taxes will have to be cut under rules of 2025 federal law

* North Dakota and South Dakota are Medicaid expansion states but do not have an existing provider tax that would have to be cut under the federal law.

** Kansas and Wisconsin are not Medicaid expansion states; federal rule on cutting provider taxes does not apply to non-expansion states.

*Source: KFF*

# ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

## New laws for a new era: Need to meet increased electricity demand reflected in comprehensive measures passed in Illinois and Ohio

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

Illinois and Ohio lawmakers overhauled their states' energy policies in 2025, choosing different paths to the same destination: increasing electricity generation to meet skyrocketing demand.

In Ohio, a new law encourages new generation capacity through a mix of regulatory streamlining; tax breaks for qualifying projects; and a provision that allows large electricity users to generate their own, on-site, "behind the meter" electricity.

In Illinois, lawmakers are providing state regulators new powers to negotiate rate hikes to pay for increased generation or storage; requiring more long-term capacity planning; and lifting a moratorium on building nuclear power plants.

The two states' new laws include numerous other provisions as well, many with the goal of having more-responsive energy policies in place — a necessity, the bills' sponsors say, considering broader economic trends.

### 'THINGS CHANGING RAPIDLY'

All three of the Midwest's regional transmission operators are predicting sharply increasing demand for electricity over the next 10 to 20 years (see table), driven by the growth of data centers and artificial intelligence, electric vehicles and, possibly, new technologies such as the use of electrolysis for hydrogen production.

"When we passed [the Climate Equity & Jobs Act] four years ago, everybody kind of assumed that demand would remain relatively stable," says Illinois Sen. Steve Stadelman, who sponsored SB 25. (As of early December, the bill was still awaiting the signature of the governor, who said he will sign it.)

"But because of the data centers and the increased demand, things are changing very rapidly."

The boom in data centers, in particular, informed some of Ohio legislators' work on HB 15, which took effect in August.

"Some people say they don't want them; well, you don't want them in your backyard, but they're still going to be built," says Rep. Roy Klopfenstein, chief sponsor of HB 15. "It's just a matter of where. Ohio has opened that door and said, 'Look, we know they're going to be built. We wouldn't mind having them here in the correct place.' "

### 'SHOT CLOCK' AND TAX CUTS

To streamline the regulatory process, legislators are putting a "shot clock" on the Ohio Siting Board regarding the approval of new electric generating plants, transmission lines and gas pipelines.

> "Giving the ability to data centers to build this transmission or build this generation behind the meter, and actually own it, is going to spur that development."
>
> *Ohio Rep. Roy Klopfenstein*

This includes proposals to build on a brownfield or former coal mine designated as a "priority investment area" by local governments.

The Power Siting Board must evaluate the completeness of project applications in priority investment areas within 45 days. It then has another 45 days to issue a final decision. An application is considered approved if the deadline is not met.

For electric generation, transmission-line and pipeline projects outside the priority areas, board review also is accelerated — a statutory maximum of 195 days, and an even quicker timeline for some projects.

"Regulatory certainty was a critical factor for us," says Sen. Brian Chavez, chair of the Senate Energy Committee.

Another new mechanism for building up Ohio's energy infrastructure: significant reductions in the tangible personal property tax for new electric generation facilities, energy-conversion equipment, and energy-storage systems. A complete property tax exemption (applied for five years) will be available for projects in the locally designated priority investment areas.

HB 15 also now allows for "behind the meter" energy production, such as on-site generation at data centers.

"Giving the ability to data centers to build this transmission or build this generation behind the meter, and actually own it, is going to spur that development," Klopfenstein says.

### 'MORE NIMBLE' APPROACH

In 2021, Illinois legislators adopted the Climate Equity & Jobs Act (SB 2408), a comprehensive law that includes a goal of generating 100 percent of electricity from non-carbon sources by 2045.

SB 25, passed in October 2025, keeps that goal and its phased-in reductions of greenhouse gas emissions, while also adding statutory provisions to address issues around affordability and reliability.

For example, the new law gives more powers, and responsibilities, to the Illinois Commerce Commission, the state regulator of utilities and energy markets. Among the ICC's new powers: the authority to delay planned closures of fossil fuel plants as well as to approve utility rate hikes tied to the construction of new power plants. (SB 25 does provide a way for legislators to suspend commission-approved rate hikes and to negotiate changes.)

"We need to be more nimble in trying to address these energy spikes or demand spikes, and so we'll want to give the ICC more authority to figure out what the mix is and how we meet that demand," Stadelman says.

The commission also is empowered to approve, modify or direct changes to utility programs and procurement plans in order to address resource adequacy or reliability shortfalls.

Delaying implementation of phased-in reductions of greenhouse gas emissions is an option, but only as a last resort — and "to the minimum extent and duration necessary to address the resource adequacy shortfall."

Starting in 2028, the ICC must include ways to expand existing or future electric transmission system capacity in its regular updates of the state's "Renewable Energy Access Plan." Utilities serving at least 200,000 customers also will be required to study and propose the use of new technologies (software and hardware upgrades) that maximize capacity and reliability within their existing transmission infrastructure.

And together, state regulators and utilities will develop a statewide integrated resource plan that assesses future electricity demand, resource adequacy and reliability needs over five-, 10-, 15-, and 20-year periods. The plan must be continually updated.

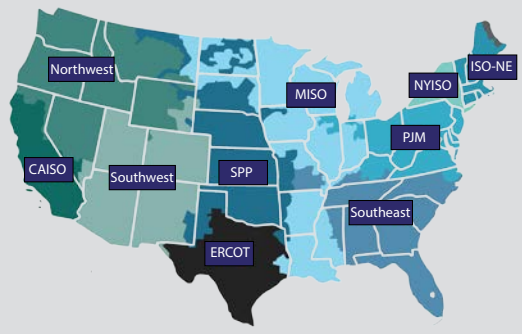
Other provisions in SB 25:

- Establish a new energy-storage procurement mandate. Electric utilities serving more than 300,000 customers must install at least 3,000 MW of battery storage capacity by 2030. The goal is to bolster the use of wind and solar power by being able to use this stored energy at night or when the wind isn't blowing.
- Create virtual power plant programs, under which utility customers can earn revenue by supplying energy (via their home batteries or solar panels, for example) to the grid when needed.
- Require utilities to expand time-of-use pricing options — for example, charging higher rates at peak hours. (The law also strengthens demand response programs that incentivize customers to reduce peak power use.)
- Fund pilot programs for geothermal energy networks and increase subsidies that retrofit homes for energy savings.
- End a moratorium on the construction of large-scale nuclear power plants. (HB 2473 of 2023 lifted the ban for small modular reactors.)

Jon Davis is CSG Midwest staff liaison to the Midwestern Legislative Conference Energy & Environment Committee. Illinois Sen. Laura Ellman and Michigan Rep. Pauline Wendzel serve as committee co-chairs. North Dakota Rep. Anna Novak and Saskatchewan MLA Erika Ritchie are the co-vice chairs.

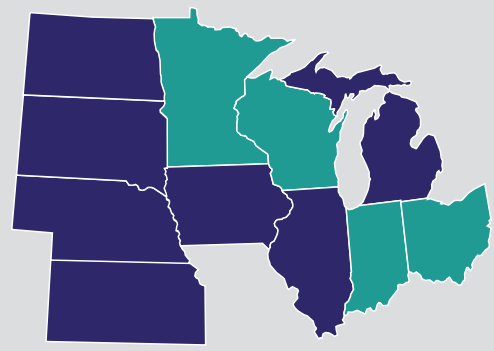
### FUTURE POWER NEEDS IN THE MIDWEST: PROJECTIONS FROM THREE REGIONAL TRANSMISSION OPERATORS

| Operator | Coverage area | Demand projections |
|---|---|---|
| MISO | All or parts of Manitoba and 15 states, including nine in Midwest | Peak demand rises 1% to 2% annually through 2044 (December 2024 forecast) |
| PJM | All or parts of District of Columbia and 13 states, including three in Midwest | Over next 15 years, summer peak demand climbs to 220,000 MW, an increase of about 70,000 MW; PJM's record summer peak was 165,563 MW in 2006 (January 2025 forecast) |
| SPP | All or parts of 14 states, including five in Midwest | More than doubling of peak demand by 2035, to 109 GW (January 2025 forecast) |




*Sources: Demand projections from reports of regional transmission operators; map from Federal Energy Regulatory Commission*

### STATES AS NET 'DELIVERERS' OR 'RECIPIENTS' OF ELECTRICITY IN 2023*

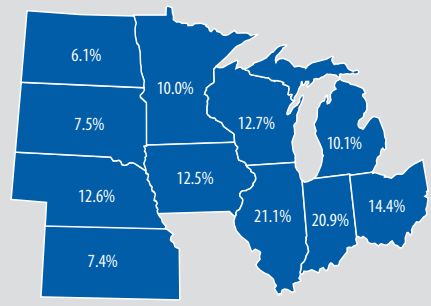


- Net deliverer: State's generation of electricity exceeded consumption; excess electricity transmitted across state lines
- Net recipient: State's generation of electricity was less than consumption; more electricity came into the state (via interstate transmission) than went out

* Almost 10% of U.S. electricity generation is traded across state lines. In 2023, Illinois was one of the nation's top net deliverers of electricity (behind only Pennsylvania and Alabama). Ohio was the Midwest's largest net recipient of electricity. Nationwide, the largest net recipient was Virginia, thanks in part to the proliferation of data centers in that state.

*Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration*

### PROJECTED INCREASE IN AVERAGE MONTHLY ELECTRIC BILLS: 2024 TO 2025*




*Nationwide, the year-over-year increase is estimated to be 9.6%. In 2025, the average monthly bills in the 11-state Midwest are estimated to range from $121 in Minnesota to $161 in Indiana. Nationwide, the average monthly bill is estimated to be $156 in 2025.

*Source: National Energy Assistance Directors Association (using data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration)*

# AGRICULTURE & RURAL AFFAIRS

## Legislative proposals, and a new law in North Dakota, seek changes on when pesticide makers can be held liable for 'failure to warn'

by Rebecca Leis *(rleis@csg.org)*

In April 2025, North Dakota became the first state to limit pesticide liability lawsuits in cases where a manufacturer complies with federal law and labeling standards.

Under the new law (HB 1318), a federally approved label now fulfills any "duty to warn" requirements regarding the safety of a pesticide.

Will more states follow?

Similar bills were introduced over the past year in 10 other U.S. states, with one becoming law: Georgia's SB 144.

Iowa was the only other Midwestern state to consider such a measure; SF 394 passed the Senate in March 2025 but stalled in the House. Iowa Sen. Tom Shipley supported the change in his state, saying the current legal framework puts pesticide manufacturers between a "rock and a hard place."

Iowa Sen. Tom Shipley

Even if they follow the letter of the law and have a product label approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Shipley says, these manufacturers can still be sued under states' product-liability laws. The consequence for farmers, he adds, is potentially losing access to herbicides, insecticides and other key inputs if manufacturers phase them out due to soaring liability costs.

### LAWSUITS OVER GLYPHOSATE

This recent push for pesticide liability legislation stems largely from litigation over Roundup, a glyphosate-based herbicide.

According to an August 2025 *Reuters* news article, Bayer has paid more than $10 billion to settle cases involving its glyphosate product and has set aside $1.37 billion more to address some 61,000 remaining U.S. cases.

The success of these lawsuits is based on a common component of state liability laws known as the "duty to warn": If manufacturers do not provide adequate, timely or reasonable warnings about known or foreseeable risks associated with the use of their products, they can be held liable for damages.

But should pesticide manufacturers be shielded from such claims if they have complied with EPA registration procedures and received an EPA-approved pesticide label — such as in the case with Roundup?

Yes, say the backers of North Dakota's HB 1318 and Iowa's SF 394.

Conversely, plaintiffs in the Roundup cases allege that the pesticide manufacturer breached its duty to warn users that glyphosate may be carcinogenic.

The success of litigants is based largely upon a 2015 International Agency for Research on Cancer study, which classified glyphosate as "probably carcinogenic to humans."

The EPA, however, has not reached any such conclusions. It conducted an interim registration review of glyphosate in 2020 and issued a decision that read in part: "There are no risks of concern to human health when glyphosate is used in accordance with its current label … [and] glyphosate is unlikely to be a human carcinogen."

Two years later, though, the EPA withdrew this interim decision after a federal court found "serious errors" in the agency's assessment of human-health risks. Glyphosate-based herbicides remain available as the EPA collects further data in advance of a final decision (expected in 2026).

### PESTICIDE USE AND REGULATION

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, approximately 473,000 tons of pesticides was used for U.S. agricultural purposes in 2023.

Without pesticides, estimated crop losses would reduce production by 50 percent for wheat, 60 percent for soybeans and 68 percent for corn, according to an oft-cited 2005 study by the Institute for Plant Diseases.

The Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) requires the registration of all pesticides sold or distributed in the United States.

As part of this registration process, the EPA conducts a scientific, legal and administrative review, evaluating the product's ingredients, proposed uses, application rates and disposal methods. Manufacturers must submit data to regulators showing that the product, when used as directed, poses no unreasonable risk to human health or the environment.

The EPA re-reviews each pesticide on the market at least once every 15 years. Also under the law, product labeling must be approved by the EPA.

### ROOM FOR STATE POLICY

Though pesticide oversight and regulation rest primarily with the federal government, states can play a role as well. For example, they have the authority to limit where and how EPA-approved pesticides are used.

Federal law is more restrictive on state-based labeling. A statutory provision in FIFRA says states cannot have labeling or packaging requirements "in addition to or different from" those imposed by the EPA.

However, a California law requires manufacturers to provide a warning label for any chemicals known to cause cancer. This led the state to propose a carcinogen warning for glyphosate. This action was blocked in 2023 by a federal court based on First Amendment challenges and the lack of scientific consensus on the health effects of glyphosate.

One year later, attorneys general in Indiana, Iowa, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and six other states petitioned the EPA to create uniform labeling requirements and preempt state labeling of FIFRA-regulated products. This petition remains under EPA review.

Meanwhile, the Modern Ag Alliance, a coalition of producer associations and agricultural manufacturers, has been leading efforts to limit pesticide liability lawsuits through state legislation, including the new law in North Dakota.

The alliance's executive director, Elizabeth Burns Thompson, notes that manufacturers cannot simply add precautionary disclaimers to labels in order to avoid lawsuits.

"Scientific justification [for] every piece of that label is required," she notes," or [the EPA] will not approve it." Further, if manufacturers include information that the federal agency does not agree with, the product is "misbranded" and cannot be sold.

### PROS, CONS IN NORTH DAKOTA

North Dakota Sen. Jonathan Sickler says compelling cases were made by both sides during legislative debate over HB 1318.

North Dakota Sen. Jonathan Sickler

Preventing lawsuits, when there is clear compliance with federal law and labeling standards, provides certainty to pesticide manufacturers and ensures growers' access to products.

On the other hand, Sickler says, agricultural producers and industry workers face the greatest exposure risk, and some of them expressed an understandable desire to retain a potential cause of action.

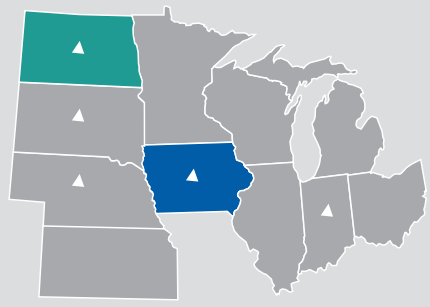
He ultimately voted against HB 1318 for at least two reasons.

First, he said, a "blanket statutory solution" may not offer the necessary flexibility. "Judges and juries and court systems are in a position to take into account what the parties knew at the time when they were offering the product," says Sickler, a Harvard-trained lawyer.

Second, the law takes away a "duty to warn" claim based on the actions of a federal agency. He was not comfortable with such a deferral to the EPA.

Rebecca Leis is CSG Midwest staff liaison to the Midwestern Legislative Conference Agriculture & Rural Affairs Committee. Nebraska Sen. Teresa Ibach and North Dakota Sen. Paul Thomas serve as committee co-chairs. Minnesota Sen. Robert Kupec and Illinois Rep. Bradley Fritts are the co-vice chairs.

### RECENT STATE-LEVEL ACTIVITY ON PESTICIDE LABELING AND MANUFACTURER LIABILITY



△ Part of 11-state coalition that petitioned U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 2024 to create uniform labeling requirements and preempt state labeling

● Law enacted in 2025 limiting pesticide liability lawsuits when manufacturer has complied with federal law and labeling requirements

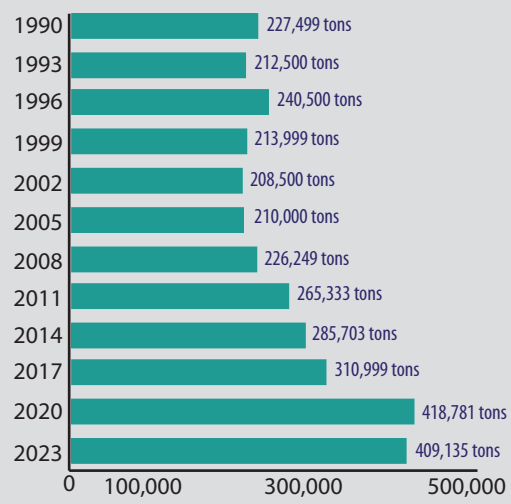
● Bill introduced in 2025 barring pesticide liability lawsuits when manufacturer has complied with federal law and labeling requirement; legislation passed Senate and stalled in House

### #S ON PESTICIDE USE IN AGRICULTURE

| | |
|---|---|
| 96% | *% OF SOYBEAN FIELDS TREATED WITH HERBICIDES; GLYPHOSATE WAS ACTIVE INGREDIENT IN 93% OF THESE APPLICATIONS (2023)* |
| 96% | *% OF CORN FIELDS TREATED WITH HERBICIDES; GLYPHOSATE WAS ACTIVE INGREDIENT IN 41% OF THESE APPLICATIONS (2021)* |
| 92% | *% OF DURUM WHEAT FIELDS TREATED WITH HERBICIDES; GLYPHOSATE WAS ACTIVE INGREDIENT IN 48% OF THESE APPLICATIONS (2024)* |
| 473 THOUSAND | *TONS OF PESTICIDES USED IN U.S. AGRICULTURE IN 2023 — ABOUT 12% OF GLOBAL AGRICULTURE USE* |

*Sources: U.S. Department of Agriculture (top three numbers) and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (bottom number)*

### 30-YEAR TREND IN HERBICIDE USE IN U.S. AGRICULTURE, 1993-2023




*Source: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*

# EDUCATION & WORKFORCE

## Laws in Indiana, Minnesota and Ohio take aim at preventing cyberattacks — a growing threat that can impact school operations, staff and students

by Derek Cantù *(dcantu@csg.org)*

State K-12 education systems rely heavily on the "internet of things," both for the instruction of students and in everyday operations.

Teachers upload homework assignments onto cloud portals. Daily attendance numbers and student grades are tracked and shared electronically. Digital payment systems are set up with external vendors. Students participate remotely in college-level coursework and career- and technical-education programs.

For all these reasons and more, when a cyberattack hits a school's information technology infrastructure, the consequences can be severe.


Indiana Rep. Matt Lehman

"Ransomware costs themselves can be quite high [for schools], and then there's the more-difficult-to-quantify cost associated with the loss of personnel data and student data that's then later misused," explains Reg Leichty, a legal and policy adviser to the Consortium for School Networking, an association of K-12 education technology leaders.

States are stepping in to address these threats — from the adoption of rules on incident reporting and new cybersecurity standards, to targeted financial assistance for schools, to more training for school staff and learning opportunities for students.

### WHEN A CYBERATTACK HITS ...

The prevalence of cyber incidents appears to be quite high.

Over 18 months, between July 2023 and December 2024, the Center for Internet Security and the Multi-State Information Sharing & Analysis Center assessed cyber-threat risks among school systems across the country. Their 2025 report found that 82 percent of K-12 organizations experienced a cyber incident of some kind, with attackers mostly exploiting human behavior through phishing scams and malicious advertisements.

A 2023 incident from Minnesota underscores the seriousness of ransomware attacks on schools, Leichty says. That year, cybercriminals hit the Minneapolis Public School District.

According to *The 74*, a nonprofit news outlet focused on education, perpetrators gained access to around 157 terabytes worth of data containing the sensitive information of more than 105,000 people. When the school district refused to pay the ransom of $4.5 million in cryptocurrency, many files were posted on the dark web.


"The file tree suggests those records involve student sexual violence allegations, district finances, student discipline, special education, civil rights investigations, student maltreatment and sex offender notifications," *The 74* reported at the time.

### STATE-LEVEL REQUIREMENTS

At the state level, one option is to centralize incident reporting as well as cybersecurity protection standards and responses, as opposed to relying on a patchwork of local policies.

Minnesota's HF 5216, signed into law in 2024, requires schools and local governments to report cyber threats to the Commissioner of Public Safety within 72 hours. A report detailing cyber-threat instances and responses will be submitted annually to the governor and Legislature.

This year, Ohio legislators passed a law directing the state's political subdivisions, including school districts, to not pay ransom demands in most cases. HB 96 also requires the reporting of cyber incidents to the Ohio Department of Public Safety and the state auditor within seven and 30 days, respectively. Additionally, schools must adopt safeguard policies based on national cybersecurity best practices.

### 'PROACTIVE' IN INDIANA

In early 2025, the Consortium for School Networking singled out a few states for having comprehensive approaches to cybersecurity protection: "strengthening institutional leadership, protecting sensitive information, expanding professional development requirements, and creating sustainable funding mechanisms for cybersecurity initiatives."

Indiana was one of the consortium's "spotlight states."

SB 150 of 2024 and SB 472 of 2025 direct the Indiana Office of Technology and State Department of Education to develop cybersecurity-use standards. These standards will be available for all school districts to use as a guide by the end of 2027.

Also in Indiana, school employees must complete training in cybersecurity best practices. And any school corporation connecting to the state government's technology infrastructure must first complete a cybersecurity assessment, use a secondary end-user authentication mechanism, and comply with the cybersecurity standards.

"We're trying to be proactive more than we are reactive," says Rep. Matt Lehman, a chief sponsor of both bills.

He notes that another provision in SB 150 created the Artificial Intelligence Task Force. The result, Lehman says, has been more discussion around the responsible use of AI in the public sector and its links to cybersecurity.

A proposed amendment to SB 472 would have created a state grant program to help Indiana school districts pay for cybersecurity insurance. Funding for the program would have partially come from civil fines paid by adult-content websites that violate Indiana's new age-verification rules. The final version of SB 472 did not include this amendment.

But at least one state outside the Midwest is now helping schools with the rising cost of cybersecurity insurance.

Arkansas legislators created the Self-Funded Cyber Response Program in 2023 (HB 1780) to act as a secondary coverage plan for schools. Two years later, they directed the State Insurance Department to administer coverage to districts participating in multi-school insurance programs (HB 1821/SB 481) and appropriated $10 million to the Cyber Response Program.

### 'GET KIDS INVOLVED'

Another policy option is to incorporate cybersecurity into the K-12 curriculum.

Starting this year in North Dakota, high school students must complete a course in computer science or cybersecurity in order to graduate (HB 1398 of 2023). These subjects also must be taught to students in the state's elementary and middle schools.

In Nebraska, lawmakers considered, but did not pass, the Holistic Approach to Cybersecurity for K-12 Education Resource Act. Along with establishing state cybersecurity standards and developing a funding mechanism for schools based on tiers of need, LB 599 called for the State Board of Education to create new curriculum standards on digital citizenship.


Nebraska Sen. Wendy DeBoer

The board also would have been tasked with building new career pipeline programs. These opportunities could have come in the form of high school internships at cybersecurity companies, or financial incentives for postsecondary cybersecurity majors to live and work in Nebraska (particularly rural areas).

"The idea was to get kids involved in the field younger … into areas that we think there'll be some growth in terms of jobs in the future," says Sen. Wendy DeBoer, the author of LB 599.

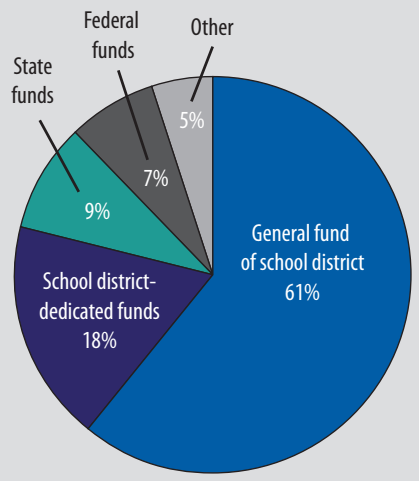
Derek Cantù is CSG Midwest staff liaison to the Midwestern Legislative Conference Education & Workforce Committee. Nebraska Sen. Jana Hughes and Minnesota Rep. Bernie Perryman serve as committee co-chairs. Kansas Rep. Mari-Lynn Poskin is the vice chair.

### EXAMPLES OF POLICIES IMPLEMENTED BY STATES TO IMPROVE CYBERSECURITY IN K-12 SCHOOLS

- ✓ Dedicate funding/establish grants for local schools' cybersecurity programs
- ✓ Establish statutory protocols that require reporting of cybersecurity incidents and how these incidents were handled
- ✓ Develop statewide cybersecurity standards for use (voluntary or mandatory) by schools
- ✓ Assist schools with securing and/or purchasing cybersecuity insurance
- ✓ Require or encourage school staff to take part in cybersecurity-related professional development and training
- ✓ Develop curriculum standards and/or graduation requirements related to the instruction of internet safety and cybersecurity
- ✓ Invest in scholarships and career pathways to strengthen the information technology/ cybersecurity workforce
- ✓ Create new state-level offices or positions that manage cybersecurity policies and responses in the public sector, including schools

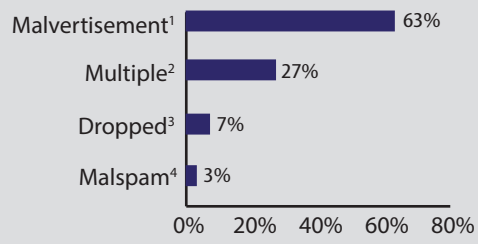
*Sources: The Consortium for School Networking and CSG Midwest research*

### RESULTS OF SURVEY RESPONSES FROM K-12 EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY LEADERS TO THIS QUESTION: HOW ARE A MAJORITY OF YOUR CYBERSECURITY EFFORTS FUNDED?




*Source: Consortium for School Networking, "2025 State of EdTech District Leadership"*

### VECTORS USED BY CYBERATTACKERS TO GAIN ACCESS TO K-12 SYSTEMS




[1] Malware introduced through malicious advertisements

[2] Malware that uses at least two vectors

[3] Malware delivered by other malware already on the system

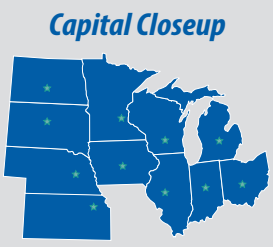
[4] Unsolicited emails that direct users to download malware

*Sources: Center for Internet Security and the Multi-State Information Sharing & Analysis Center*

## CAPITAL CLOSEUP: VOTERS IN NEBRASKA AND NORTH DAKOTA BEING ASKED TO ALTER TERM-LIMITS LAWS

Term limits is coming back to the ballot in two Midwestern states, this time as the subject of two legislatively referred constitutional amendments approved in 2025 by the **Nebraska** and **North Dakota** legislatures. Both measures seek to alter, rather than abolish, legislative term limits previously approved by voters in those two states.

Nebraska's law dates back 25 years and prevents members of the Unicameral Legislature from serving more than two consecutive, four-year terms in office. The proposed constitutional amendment would allow up to 12 years of consecutive legislative service.




"By adding one term to the current term limit, we can allow senators to represent their constituents [when] they're most knowledgeable and effective," Nebraska Sen. Robert Dover, the sponsor of LR 19CA, said in committee testimony.

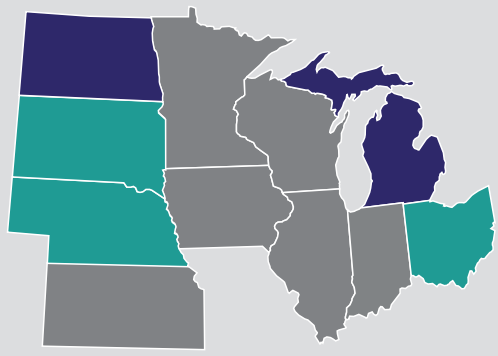
Sixteen U.S. states currently have legislative term limits. The most recent such law was enacted by North Dakota voters in 2022 — a lifetime cap of eight years in the House and eight years in the Senate. Under the change being sought by legislators, members could serve up to four, four-year terms, amounting to a total of 16 years, regardless of legislative chamber.

In his floor testimony in favor of SCR 4008, North Dakota Sen. Michael Dwyer said his work as a legislator has been positively impacted by the guidance of more-experienced colleagues. Allowing members to serve longer in the House or Senate will allow this kind of legislator-to-legislator mentoring and support to continue, he said.

**Michigan** voters changed the state's term-limits law in 2022, supporting a legislatively referred constitutional amendment. The previous law had set lifetime limits of three two-year terms in the House and two four-year terms in the Senate. Now, the lifetime cap is set at 12 years (instead of 14), but all of those years can be spent in a single chamber. Legislators sought this tweak, in part, to allow for more legislative continuity and institutional knowledge in each chamber.

*Capital Closeup is an ongoing series of CSG Midwest articles focusing on institutional issues in state governments and legislatures. Past articles can be found at* csgmidwest.org.

### LEGISLATIVE TERM LIMITS IN MIDWEST



Lifetime limit on time in office:
- **Michigan**, 12 years total in the Legislature
- **North Dakota**, two four-year terms in the House and two four-year terms in the Senate

Limit on consecutive terms in office:
- **Nebraska**, two four-year terms in the Unicameral
- **Ohio**, four two-year terms in the House and two four-year terms in the Senate
- **South Dakota**, four two-year terms in House and two four-year terms in the Senate

## ILLINOIS IS FIRST MIDWESTERN STATE TO LEGALIZE MEDICAL AID-IN-DYING OPTION FOR TERMINALLY ILL PATIENTS

Starting in the latter part of 2026, **Illinois** will begin allowing terminally ill, mentally capable adults to obtain and self-administer medication to end their lives. Legislators passed SB 1950 during the fall veto session of the Illinois General Assembly. According to the advocacy group Death with Dignity, similar bills were passed in 2025 by legislatures in Delaware (signed into law) and New York (not yet signed by the governor as of December). Illinois became the 12th U.S. state, and first in the Midwest, with such a law.

Under SB 1950, individuals with a prognosis of six months or less to live can request a prescription for aid-in-dying medication. The oral and written requests can only be made by the patient to the patient's attending physician. SB 1950 includes language for what that written request should entail. (A written, signed request is mandatory.) No health care provider is required to participate, and the new law makes it a felony to coerce anyone to request the medication.

The attending physician's duties include determining the mental capacity of the patient (with referral to a mental health profession if warranted), confirming that coercion did not play a role in the request, providing information on other end-of-life treatment options, and referring the patient to a consulting physician for medical confirmation.

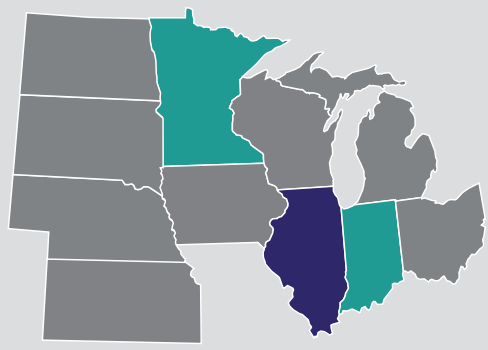
The Illinois Department of Public Health will produce annual reports on the number of prescriptions for aid-in-dying medication, the number of physicians who prescribed it, and the number of deaths.

Oregon's Death With Dignity Act was the first of its kind in the nation and dates back to 1997. In 2024, there were 607 recipients of aid-in-dying medication in Oregon and 376 deaths. The number of deaths under the Oregon law has risen over time — from 42 in 2003, to 73 in 2014, to a high of 386 in 2023 (followed by a slight decline in 2024).

Over the past five years, these measures have been introduced but not passed in several Midwestern states: **Indiana** (HB 1011 of 2025), **Iowa** (SF 2101 and HF 2288 of 2024), **Kansas** (HB 2202 of 2021), **Michigan** (SB 681 of 2023), **Minnesota** (SF 3215 of 2025), and **Wisconsin** (AB 781 of 2024).

Canada has allowed eligible adults to request medical assistance in dying for nearly a decade. The federal law does not make eligibility contingent on a terminal illness; the criteria is having a "grievous and irremediable medical condition." The aid-in-dying medication can be administered by either a health professional or the patient. In 2023, the number of medically assisted deaths in Canada reached a one-year high of 15,343 — 4.7 percent of all the country's deaths that year.

### STATUS OF BILLS ALLOWING ELIGIBLE TERMINALLY ILL INDIVIDUALS TO REQUEST, OBTAIN MEDICATION TO END THEIR LIVES (AS OF DECEMBER 2025)



- Legislation signed into law
- Legislation introduced in 2025
- No active legislation found

*Source: Death with Dignity*

## FROM TAX CREDITS TO PENSION SUPPORT TO AWARD PROGRAMS, STATES SEEK MORE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Communities of the Midwest have long relied on volunteer firefighters and other emergency first responders. Another commonality stretching across state lines: concerns about the loss of these volunteers as retention and recruitment challenges mount.

Demands on time. Increased training requirements. Aging populations. Those are among the biggest obstacles to securing an adequate number of volunteer firefighters and emergency responders, according to the U.S. Fire Administration. "The root causes … have remained similar over the past decade," it notes in a 2023 study. "What has changed is the pace of the contributing factors and the urgency needed to address them."

The region's state legislators are taking notice.

In 2025, bills were passed in **North Dakota** calling for an interim study and legislative recommendations to boost recruitment (HB 1311) and in **Iowa** to establish a Length of Service Award program (HF 1002). Iowa's program will offer a new tax-deferred benefit (for example, contributions to a retirement savings account or cash payment) for volunteer firefighters, emergency medical technicians and reserve police officers. The decision on whether to establish a Length of Service Award — and the program's rules and benefits — is left to municipalities. However, HF 1002 creates a $1.5 million state matching program to help local governments fund these programs. State dollars will come from Iowa's tax on sports wagering.

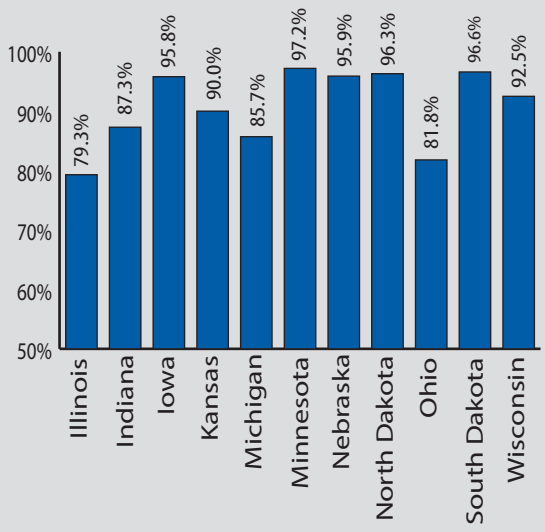
**Wisconsin** has had a Length of Service Award program for more than 20 years. A proposed expansion of this program (AB 187/SB 186 of 2025) would create a "completion service award": $500 for a volunteer firefighter who completes 60 hours of training. Half of these dollars would come from the state; the other half from the municipality.

Some states also provide support for pension or other retirement programs. **Minnesota**, for instance, allocates $5.5 million every year for the retirement plans of fire relief associations and for firefighters covered by the Statewide Volunteer Firefighter Retirement Plan (the latter is administered by the state's Public Employees Retirement Association). **Kansas** uses a 2 percent tax on fire and lightning insurance premiums to assist local firefighter relief associations; one potential use of these funds is an annuity for volunteer firefighters.

Another policy option is tax credits. Recent legislative activity in the Midwest has included Iowa's increase of an existing income tax credit from $100 to $250 and a two-bill legislative package in **Michigan** (HB 4431 and HB 4432 of 2025) that would establish a $2,500 refundable state income tax credit for volunteer firefighters and emergency services personnel.

In **Illinois**, a Volunteer Emergency Worker Tax Credit has been in effect since 2023; it is a non-refundable income tax credit worth up to $500. A legislative proposal this year (HB 1386) called for increasing the credit to $1,000. A 2023 law from Illinois (SB 1611) grants state employees a paid leave of absence for participation in firefighter training.

### ESTIMATED % OF FIRE DEPARTMENTS THAT WERE VOLUNTEER/MOSTLY VOLUNTEER AS OF JANUARY 2023




*Source: U.S. Fire Administration National Fire Department Registry*

# **PROFILE:** ILLINOIS HOUSE MINORITY LEADER TONY MCCOMBIE

## Former mayor and small-business owner says a minority caucus is best heard and most effective when listening to and amplifying the voice of constituents

by Derek Cantù *(dcantu@csg.org)*

Whether it was her time as a local restaurant owner navigating local regulations or her current role as a caucus leader of 40 members in a legislative chamber of 118, Tony McCombie has grown accustomed to articulating a minority position to those in power.

She has found her share of successes along the way.

"Being in the superminority, we let [our constituents] know what's going on," McCombie says, "and they've been instrumental in helping stop things like the [proposed] delivery tax, the mileage tax, taxing retirement and, most recently, the homeschool bill."

Years ago, it was a disagreement over commercial signage that put her on an unexpected path to serving in local and, eventually, state office.

"As a small-business owner on Main Street, the city told me I couldn't put a sandwich board on the sidewalk to [advertise] specials," she says.

"When you have an issue, you go to the place to solve it. So I decided to join the City Council to change the ordinance."

Once on the council, she led efforts to improve government transparency and eliminate backroom deal-making. City residents ultimately voted her mayor of Savanna, a town of about 3,000 people in the northwest part of Illinois.

The city faced economic challenges, people and businesses were leaving for nearby Iowa and Wisconsin, and McCombie was dissatisfied with the response from the state legislature and Savanna's local representative.

"We'd lost our hospital, our Army depot, our railroad hub, manufacturing — we can't be forgotten," she recalls of her thoughts at the time.

McCombie decided to challenge her incumbent state House representative in the 2016 election.

She won, and eventually began managing campaigns for the entire House Republican caucus. McCombie then sought on two different occasions to become minority leader. She was successful on her second try, becoming the caucus's first-ever female leader.

Here are excerpts of a CSG Midwest interview with Leader McCombie, with questions and answers lightly edited for clarity and brevity.

### **BIO-SKETCH:** ILLINOIS REP. TONY MCCOMBIE

✓ elected House minority leader in 2022; first elected to House in 2016

✓ is the first-ever female to lead a caucus in the Illinois House

✓ served as mayor of her hometown of Savanna in northwest Illinois; resides in Savanna with her husband, Curt

✓ has owned and operated several small businesses and also practiced real estate

✓ has a bachelor of arts degree from Western Illinois University

> "You can't make anybody respect me or anybody on the leadership team. You certainly have to earn that. It might be different voices [within the caucus], but it's not different principles."

**Q** Along with emphasizing the importance of messaging among constituents and caucus members, what have been some of your other approaches to legislative leadership since taking the position?

**A** When I put my team together, not only did I want a team that was geographically diverse, but also a strong group of people who weren't going to be telling me "yes" all of the time. I wanted people who were going to challenge me, and, oh boy, do they sometimes challenge me.

It's how I learn, and I think the end result is better. I also don't try to do everything by myself. It comes to even managing some of the staff, asking some people that have experience: "Hey, what are your ideas? What are some things that we can do to make their jobs better? Make their quality of life better?"

We're lucky. We have in our caucus doctors, teachers, bankers, insurance folks, law enforcement, public sector workers, accountants … and to have that with only 40 people.

I feel pretty blessed, and I wish the speaker and his team used us more and used our staff more. Nobody needs to be the wiser. If we're able to help the people of the state, we are firm believers in people before politics. Now, do we get political sometimes? Yes. But the priority is always making sure that people can succeed.

**Q** There is ideological diversity among those 40 members. How do you balance making sure perspectives from members are heard while simultaneously ensuring all members respect leadership?

**A** You can't make anybody respect me or anybody on the leadership team. You certainly have to earn that. It might be different voices, but it's not different principles. We agree on what's important for the state of Illinois. How we get there is sometimes the issue.

I don't think there's ever been a leader, Republican or Democrat, that hasn't had a disagreement with a member. I mean, I had a disagreement with my leader and ran against him.

It really is like a family. You're going to have fights; you're going to have arguments. Sometimes those aren't behind closed doors, which is unfortunate. But I think, rhetorically speaking, it's "How do I get what I want and what is that structure to do that?" And that's where we differ sometimes.

**Q** How has your own background, particularly as the former mayor of a small town, informed your approach to public service as a legislator?

**A** One of the things that I knew was going to be extremely important when I became mayor was to be transparent about what I'm doing and why. That meant being more active within the community at local events, just being there for people to ask me questions: "What's going on?" "Why are you doing this?" "What's the decision-making process?"

I took that commitment to transparency to a higher office. … Whether [my constituents] liked or didn't like what my views were or how I was voting, they were glad I was telling them.

Also, be honest. I learned that as a business owner. There was a gentleman who was running for mayor when I had a café, and he would literally tell somebody on one side of him one thing, and when they left, he would tell the person on the other side the complete opposite.

"You can't do that," I told him. And he said, "Well, that's what we do in politics." And I responded "No."

**Q** There has been a lot of attention in Illinois on potential new laws on legislative ethics, particularly in light of the criminal conviction of a former House speaker. What sort of changes do you and your caucus believe need to be made?

**A** There are several things, whether it's tightening up required lawmaker declarations of economic interests or what we permit in terms of lobbying. As much as I appreciate the other mayors in office, can you be a mayor, a state representative and a lobbyist? Probably not a good idea.

And let's put some teeth behind ethics reform. Let's put some penalty enhancements behind that.

One of the bills that I suggested was if [elected officials] do something criminal, they shouldn't be able to spend campaign dollars to fight their way out of a criminal case.

# PROFILE: MINNESOTA SENATE ASSISTANT MAJORITY LEADER MARY KUNESH

## Years in the classroom inform her work as a legislator and leader on school policy

by Tim Anderson *(tanderson@csg.org)*

For many years, the closest Mary Kunesh came to involvement in state policy was being asked to implement it.

A longtime teacher and library media specialist, she and her classroom colleagues were on the receiving end of many new education laws that came from the state Capitol — some good, she says, some not.

"The legislation often seemed to have good intention," Kunesh says, "but was not necessarily well-thought-out or not truly understanding what the real issues are. Or how it may be creating additional burdens."

One of her overarching goals since joining the Legislature: bring the voice of educators to discussions in Saint Paul over school finance and policy.

But that's not what led her to run for office in the first place. Instead, the breakthrough came from a conversation with her eldest daughter, who was managing a gubernatorial campaign and enlisted her mom to help.

Kunesh agreed, and soon began knocking on doors and traveling to Greater Minnesota as a campaign volunteer.

"It opened my understanding of what it is to be a person in politics, to run, and to know all the different issues we are all dealing with," Kunesh says.

When the opportunity came to run for office herself, thanks to a House seat that opened up in 2016, she took it. Kunesh won that election and has been a member of the Minnesota Legislature ever since, first in the House and now in the Senate. Her current leadership roles include serving as chair of the Senate Education Finance Committee, as assistant majority leader, and as chair of the National Council of American Indian Legislators.

Kunesh also is 2026 chair of The Council of State Governments' Midwestern Legislative Conference (see sidebar article below). Here are excerpts from a recent interview with CSG Midwest.

### BIO-SKETCH: MINNESOTA SEN. MARY KUNESH

✓ serves as Senate assistant majority leader and Education Finance Committee chair; first elected to Legislature in 2016

✓ worked 25 years in public education as a teacher and library media specialist

✓ is first Indigenous woman to serve in Senate and a founding member of the Native American and People of Color & Indigenous caucuses

✓ is 2026 chair of The Council of State Governments' Midwestern Legislative Conference and a 2021 graduate of its BILLD leadership program

✓ is proud mother and grandmother who comes from a family of 13 children; resides in the city of New Brighton in Twin Cities area

**Q** You've gone from teaching to serving as a leader on state education policy. How has that past experience influenced your legislative work?

**A** One constant is bringing real-life experience to it. My partner on a lot of this, Sen. Steve Cwodzinski [chair of the Education Policy Committee], also is a teacher. So we always look at new legislation and whether it's truly going to work in the classroom. The other part is this: Are these funds going to hit the classroom, or are they just going to stay at the administrative level? That is a really important consideration for me.

**Q** Has the Legislature made progress in that area?

**A** I'm really proud of what we've done in terms of how we streamlined the funding of education. We did that with a real intention: Get rid of some of the extra things we're doing that are nice, but don't have a direct return for classrooms and teachers.

There are a lot of local organizations doing really, really good work in the community for our kids. But my focus is on getting dollars into the classroom and to the teachers. And this past year, we did that. So now we can see what we're really working with and how to continue to direct those dollars.

**Q** You also have focused on policies for Minnesota's Native American communities. What have been some recent advances in that area?

**A** I myself am of Native American descent, the first Native woman to have served in the Senate. One of the things I'm most proud of is the creation of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's Task Force and, following that, a permanent office to continue the work of the task force. We've also created a specialty license plate to find a permanent revenue source for the office. It's been hugely successful.

Another thing is that in Minnesota, we created our own version of the Indian Child Welfare Act. What that did was fortify protections in our state for children and families, because there was the threat of the [federal] ICWA going away.

**Q** You served with former House Speaker Melissa Hortman, who was assassinated in June 2025 in a shooting that also took the life of her husband, Mark. What are your remembrances of her, especially enduring lessons on leadership and public service?

**A** Melissa Hortman was my House leader, and she would say: "I'm not here to devastate anybody. I'm not here to embarrass anybody. I'm not here to break anybody. So let's find a win-win here. What is it you want? Here is what I want. How can we work together so that everybody comes out a winner?"

And that's what I think good leaders do. It allows you to find ways for communities all over Minnesota to thrive, and that has a ripple effect.

**Q** To build on her legacy, how do you get to those win-win outcomes?

**A** I am always really clear with legislators on both sides. I am open to working with you; bring me your good ideas.

But it does take a lot of relationship building — a lot of understanding of not only the issue, but of the other legislators and the communities they come from.

That is something I've had to learn, where I have carried legislation in the past not having a full understanding of the impacts in a [legislative] district and why it might be unpopular. So I had to pull back a little bit. Get into that community, listen and understand what is being said.

### KUNESH: A 'JOYOUS' MINNESOTA TRADITION WILL BE PART OF TOP MEETING FOR MIDWEST'S LEGISLATORS THIS SUMMER

The premier meeting for state and provincial legislators from the Midwest will be held in the Twin Cities this summer, and it's no coincidence that a beloved Minnesota event will be happening at the same time. "If there's one thing that brings us all together as a state," Minnesota Sen. Mary Kunesh says, "it's our State Fair."

She is making sure participating legislators and their guests from across the region have the chance to experience it for themselves. The 2026 Midwestern Legislative Conference Annual Meeting will be held Aug. 30-Sept. 2 in Saint Paul; among the many activities will be a special event at the largest state fair in the country.

"It is such a joyous event," Kunesh, 2026 MLC chair, says of what is known as "The Great Minnesota Get-Together" and for, among other traditions, its Kidway and Cattle Barn, 58 different "foods on a stick," hundreds of free entertainment shows, and livestock competitions.

"But we're also excited to show everyone our beautiful Capitol and experience what a thriving state we really are."

For decades, The Council of State Governments' MLC Annual Meeting has brought together the Midwest's legislators for the chance to learn, network and collaborate across state and international lines — in a nonpartisan and friendly setting. It also showcases a great city and state of the Midwest. Kunesh and her Minnesota legislative colleagues will carry on this tradition, serving as hosts of the 80th Annual Meeting of the MLC. Registration will open soon at *csgmidwest.org*.

"If there's one thing that brings us all together as a state, it's our State Fair."

MLC Saint Paul MINNESOTA MIDWESTERN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

## HELPING HAND DURING SESSION: CSG OFFERS CUSTOMIZED PROGRAMMING, RESEARCH ASSISTANCE TO LEGISLATORS

As sessions begin in capitols across the Midwest, state legislators and legislative staff are encouraged to tap into the various resources offered through The Council of State Governments. Among them: CSG Midwest's Under the Dome program and individualized research assistance.

### UNDER THE DOME

In support of the Midwestern Legislative Conference, CSG Midwest regularly delivers customized, in-state training to legislators and legislative staff.

Ideas for Under the Dome workshops and sessions come from legislators or legislative staff in a state. CSG Midwest then develops the programming, which can be built around a topic related to professional and leadership development or a specific policy area. For example, Under the Dome workshops were held in Indiana on improving the state's electricity infrastructure and in Minnesota on critical minerals policy during those two states' 2025 legislative sessions.

UNDER THE DOME
BRINGING RESOURCES & IDEAS TO YOUR CAPITOL

Please contact CSG Midwest director Laura Tomaka at *ltomaka@csg.org* if you are interested in pursuing an Under the Dome workshop in 2026, either during or outside of legislative session.

### INDIVIDUALIZED RESEARCH ASSISTANCE

On-demand, individualized research assistance is available for legislators and legislative staff. Reach out to CSG Midwest if you have a question about a policy trend, need multi-state data, or would like to learn what other states have done in a particular issue area.

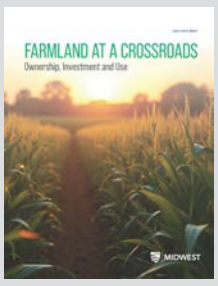
You can access research assistance by calling CSG Midwest at 630-925-1922 or sending a question to *csgm@csg.org*.

## FARMLAND OWNERSHIP, RELATED STATE POLICIES EXAMINED IN NEW REPORT

The ownership of farmland in Midwest is the subject of a comprehensive new policy resource for the region's legislators.

"Farmland at a Crossroads: Ownership, Investment and Use" explores trends in ownership, the increased "financialization" of farmland, the causes of rising land values, and the impacts on new and beginning farmers. Also included is an overview of related policies:

- state restrictions on corporate farm ownership;
- a comparison of state inheritance, estate and capital gains taxes, as well as variations in "rules of perpetuity" laws;
- programs to help farmland owners with succession planning and to assist beginning farmers; and
- an analysis of state and federal tax policies that influence farmers' decisions to retain or sell farmland.




"Farmland at a Crossroads" is available at *csgmidwest.org*. It was produced in support of The Council of State Governments' Midwestern Legislative Conference Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee. Printed copies were sent to all members of this binational, bipartisan committee of state and provincial legislators.

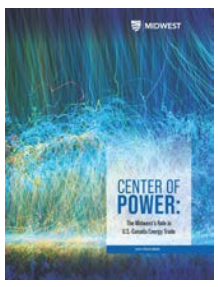
The committee has four officers: Nebraska Sen. Teresa Ibach and North Dakota Sen. Paul Thomas, co-chairs; and Illinois Rep. Bradley Fritts and Minnesota Sen. Robert Kupec, co-vice chairs.

# IMPORTANCE AND FUTURE OF BINATIONAL ENERGY TIES EXPLORED IN NEW RESOURCE FOR LEGISLATORS

To cap a yearlong focus on North American energy security, CSG Midwest has developed a new policy resource for state and provincial legislators that explores in detail the scope and importance of the U.S.-Canada relationship for this region. Topics covered include:

- The cross-border movement of oil, natural gas and other energy products.
- The interconnectedness of U.S. and Canadian electric grids, particularly in the Midwest.
- The use of uranium from Saskatchewan to fuel U.S. nuclear power plants, and new laws in the region to advance nuclear energy.
- Recent policy developments on tariffs.

"Center of Power: The Midwest's Role in U.S.-Canada Energy Trade" is available at *csgmidwest.org*. Print copies were sent in December to legislative leaders on energy policy, as well as to all members of two bipartisan, binational CSG Midwestern Legislative Conference committees: Energy & Natural Resources and Midwest-Canada Relations. Please contact CSG Midwest policy analyst Jon Davis at *jdavis@csg.org* if you would like a print copy.




Along with exploring the binational relationship, "Center of Power" includes energy-related data for every state and province in The Council of State Governments' Midwestern Legislative Conference — including the sources of electricity generation in each jurisdiction.

### ABOUT THE MLC CHAIR'S INITIATIVE IN 2025

This policy resource was developed in support of the 2025 MLC Chair's Initiative of Saskatchewan Minister Lori Carr. Under her leadership, North American energy security was the subject of various policy resources and programming for legislators over the past year.

At the 2025 MLC Annual Meeting, participating legislators adopted a policy resolution on binational energy security and partnerships. In part, it calls on Canadian and U.S. federal officials to ensure the continued free flow of energy products (including tariff-free treatment and the streamlining of regulatory processes) between the two countries. The resolution also voices support for "the use of available domestic sources of energy in Canada and the United States, both renewable and nonrenewable."

### Power relationship: Energy trade with Canada *(2024)*

| STATE | Estimated $ value of energy exports* | Estimated $ value of energy imports* |
|---|---|---|
| ILLINOIS | $2.3 billion | $47.4 billion |
| INDIANA | $287 million | $288 million |
| IOWA | $53 million | $96 million |
| KANSAS | $172 million | $75 million |
| MICHIGAN | $1.4 billion | $5.1 billion |
| MINNESOTA | $2.8 billion | $9.3 billion |
| NEBRASKA | $147 million | $7 million |
| NORTH DAKOTA | $2.0 billion | $436 million |
| OHIO | $578 million | $4.0 billion |
| SOUTH DAKOTA | $2 million | $12 million |
| WISCONSIN | $324 million | $608 million |

* These are estimates based on CSG Midwest calculations of data from the U.S. International Trade Administration. The amount of energy trade is based on binational business activity across three sectors of the North American Industry Classification System: Oil & Gas; Minerals & Ores; and Petroleum & Coal Products.

*Sources: U.S. International Trade Administration, Tradestats Express, and CSG Midwest calculations*

# FOUR LEGISLATORS LEADING MLC IN YEAR AHEAD

A bipartisan, binational group of lawmakers is in place to guide The Council of State Governments' Midwestern Legislative Conference in 2026. The four officers were elected to these positions by the MLC Executive Committee. The nonpartisan MLC serves all state and provincial legislators from this region and receives staff support from CSG Midwest.


Minnesota Sen. Mary Kunesh, chair


Nebraska Sen. R. Brad von Gillern, first vice chair


Indiana Rep. Edward D. Clere, second vice chair


Saskatchewan Minister Lori Carr, immediate past chair

• **Minnesota Sen. Mary Kunesh** is the MLC chair. First elected to the Legislature in 2016, she currently serves as Senate assistant majority leader and as chair of the Education Finance Committee. Kunesh is a 2021 graduate of CSG Midwest's Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development program (BILLD).

• **Nebraska Sen. R. Brad von Gillern** is first vice chair of the MLC. He leads the Unicameral Legislature Revenue Committee as chair. First elected in 2022, von Gillern is a 2023 BILLD graduate.

• **Indiana Rep. Edward D. Clere** is second vice chair of the MLC. A member of the Indiana House since 2008, he is chair of the Health and Medicaid Subcommittee. He is a 2010 BILLD graduate and served for many years as BILLD Steering Committee co-chair.

• **Saskatchewan Minister Lori Carr** was MLC chair in 2025 and now serves as immediate past chair. She led planning for the MLC Annual Meeting in Saskatoon, Sask., as well as efforts related to her Chair's Initiative — "North American Energy Security: Powering Our Future." First elected to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan in 2016, Carr is the minister of Mental Health and Addictions, Seniors and Rural and Remote Health.

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.

# BILLD ALUMNI NOTES: GRADUATES LEADING ON HEALTH POLICY

This past year, 107 BILLD Fellows served as chairs of various legislative committees across the 11-state Midwest. For this edition of *Stateline Midwest* — which includes a cover article and Around the Region page on health care — we highlight six BILLD alums who have led standing health policy committees over the past year.

• **Jeff Backer** is co-chair of the Minnesota House Health Finance and Policy Committee. A longtime volunteer emergency medical technician, he has worked on legislative measures to improve rural access to emergency services and support first responders. Rep. Backer graduated from BILLD in 2021 and has been a member of the Legislature since 2015.


Rep. Jeff Backer, Class of 2021

• **Brad Barrett** is chair of the Indiana House Public Health Committee. A retired general surgeon, Rep. Barrett was the sponsor of HB 1003, a law passed in 2025 that aims to reduce health care costs and improve price transparency for health consumers. He joined the Indiana General Assembly in 2019 and became a BILLD Fellow two years later.


Rep. Brad Barrett, Class of 2021

• **Rachael Cabral-Guevara** is chair of the Wisconsin Senate Committee on Health. A family nurse practitioner, she is the owner and operator of a medical clinic. Her legislative work in 2025 has included an effort to expand access to breast cancer screenings for women with dense breast tissue (SB 264). Sen. Cabral-Guevara completed BILLD in 2021, her first year of legislative service.


Sen. Rachael Cabral-Guevara, Class of 2021

• **Ed Charbonneau** is chair of the Indiana Senate Health and Provider Services Committee. A former hospital president and CEO, he has been a senator since 2007. He completed BILLD during his second year in office. In 2024, Indiana launched an All-Payer Claims Database for health consumers. It is based on a bill authored by Sen. Charbonneau (SB 5 of 2020).


Sen. Ed Charbonneau, Class of 2008

• **Laura Fine** is chair of the Illinois Senate Behavioral and Mental Health Committee. She completed BILLD in 2014, her second year in office. Sen. Fine's accomplishments have included new laws to improve consumer protections in health insurance. Personal experience informed this legislative work, with her own family having faced cost and coverage challenges after a car accident seriously injured her husband, Michael.


Sen. Laura Fine, Class of 2014

• **Jesse James** is chair of the Wisconsin Senate Mental Health, Substance Abuse Prevention, Children and Families Committee. A former police and fire chief, Sen. James joined the Legislature in 2019 and soon led efforts to address the opioid epidemic. In 2023, James authored SB 267, which created a network of high schools that help young people in recovery from substance abuse or mental health disorders. He completed BILLD during his third year in office.


Sen. Jesse James, Class of 2021

# Q & A WITH LEGISLATORS FROM THE 2025 CLASS: REFLECTIONS ON THE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM AND HOW IT WILL SHAPE THEIR WORK IN YEAR AHEAD

## ILLINOIS REP. MARY BETH CANTY | BILLD CLASS OF 2025

***On her experience of going through the five-day leadership institute***

"The program sessions helped us to see different perspectives in unexpected ways. I felt challenged, but in a way that made me think more about why I felt so strongly about my views, and how I could better communicate them in a way people could receive. I also left with friends. It sounds cliché, but we had a chance to really get to know and learn from each other, and there is something powerful about knowing we have colleagues across the Midwest and Canada that we can turn to for ideas and help."

***On how BILLD will help her during the 2026 legislative session and beyond***

"My colleagues [from the 2025 class]. We still text and call each other to discuss legislation, concerns and how to best address policy. If I could do this program every year, I would."

## WISCONSIN REP. WILLIAM PENTERMAN | BILLD CLASS OF 2025

***On his experience of going through the five-day leadership institute***

"In today's challenging political environment, the BILLD program brings legislators together from different backgrounds, parties and personalities. There is more that unites us rather than divides us. Seeing politicians as people first paves the way for collaboration and connecting as public servants. The BILLD program provided me with the tools to be a more effective legislator."

***On how BILLD will help him during the 2026 legislative session and beyond***

"The relationships we built as legislators during BILLD will benefit all of us during our work in the future. In state government, you don't have to reinvent the wheel. Oftentimes, another legislator in another state is working on something that would also be beneficial in your state. Keeping in touch with colleagues and building upward will help move the Midwest forward."

## OHIO REP. ELGIN ROGERS | BILLD CLASS OF 2025

***On his experience of going through the five-day leadership institute***

"It is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for legislators to connect with other peers from across the various states and provinces and address the internal, professional and legislative challenges that we all face as public servants. It requires an introspective deep dive into understanding self — more so your leadership style and your ability to collaborate with others, with the goal of maximizing your effectiveness as a legislator on behalf of those you serve."

***On how BILLD will help him during the 2026 legislative session and beyond***

"BILLD highlights that I am not alone. I have a vast network of legislators from North Dakota to Saskatchewan to Ohio and beyond that are part of my support. The connections made at BILLD are authentic, ideologically diverse, and are truly representative of what the democratic process should model. It's about the ability to have robust discussion, debate, compromise, and to develop viable solutions to improve humanity — within and across party lines."

# READY TO EXPERIENCE BILLD? APPLY IN 2026

Reps. Rogers, Canty and Penterman are part of a 2025 graduating class of BILLD Fellows that includes 38 state and provincial legislators from the Midwest. Held every year, the Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development is designed for legislators in their first four years of service.

The 2026 program will be held July 17-21 in Madison, Wis. Fellows are selected by a bipartisan committee of legislators from 11 Midwestern states. Applications are available at *csgmidwest.org*. If you have questions, please contact BILLD program coordinator Adam Diersing at *adiersing@csg.org*.

More than 1,000 current and former state and provincial lawmakers are graduates of BILLD, a signature program of The Council of State Governments' Midwestern Legislative Conference.

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# CSG EVENTS IN 2026

**Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development**

July 17-21, 2026 | Madison, Wisconsin
*Application deadline: April 13*

Contact: Adam Diersing ~ *adiersing@csg.org*
630.925.1922 | *csgmidwest.org*

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**CSG Henry Toll Fellowship Program**

August 21-25, 2026 | Lexington, Kentucky

Contact: Lorna Patches
*lpatches@csg.org*
859.244.8000 | *csg.org*

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**Midwestern Legislative Conference Annual Meeting**

August 30-September 2, 2026 | Saint Paul, Minnesota

Contact: Laura Tomaka ~ *ltomaka@csg.org*
630.925.1922 | *csgmidwest.org*

**Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Legislative Caucus Annual Meeting**

September 28-29, 2026 | Marquette, Michigan

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

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**Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission Annual Meeting**

November 16-18, 2026 | La Crosse, Wisconsin

Contact: Laura Kliewer ~ *lkliewer@csg.org*
630.925.1922 | *miprc.org*

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**2026 CSG National Conference**

December 3-6, 2026 | Anaheim, California

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

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