

MARCH / APRIL 2023

IMPACT

**Working with Partners
to Bring Reliable
Energy to the Midwest**

PAGE 8

**How the Michigan
Media Could be a
Better Watchdog**

PAGE 24

**A NEW TOOL FOR
FREEDOM IN MICHIGAN**

PAGE 18

- 3 **Mackinac in the Media**
- 4 **What Do You Do Anyway?
The Role of Think Tanks in Society**
- 6 **From Teaching Students to
Teaching Lawmakers**
- 8 **Working with Partners to Bring
Reliable Energy to the Midwest**
- 10 **Union Took Millions in PPP Funds:
Mackinac Center lawsuit holds
MEA accountable**
- 12 **John and Jennie Stinson: Advocates
for a Strong Work Ethic and Prosperity**



- 14 **Schools, Students, Mackinac Center
Partners Celebrate National School
Choice Week at Michigan Capitol**
- 16 **Mackinac Center Addresses
Corporate Welfare Deal in Big Rapids**
- 18 **A New Tool for Freedom in Michigan**
- 22 **Frank Beckmann Center
For Journalism Reaches
Second Milestone**
- 24 **How the Michigan Media
Could be a Better Watchdog**
- 28 **National Labor Effort is Paying Off**



**MACKINAC
IN THE
MEDIA**

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Taxes Have Made New York Into an Empire of Cigarette Smuggling

New York can't keep tobacco, drugs and other contraband out of its prisons and jails. How does it expect to stop smugglers from finding ways to bring untaxed cigarettes into the state?

Todd Nesbit, Assistant Professor of Free Enterprise at Ball State University, and Michael LaFaive, Senior Director of the Morey Fiscal Policy Initiative

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Michigan's Surprise Tax Cut Survives

The small cut will save the average family about \$130 a year, according to the Mackinac Center for Public Policy. Since the state's income tax is flat, every taxpayer will get a cut.

The Wall Street Journal Editorial Board

USA TODAY

Michigan posts 'closed for business' sign to please unions. Biden wants the same for US.

Supporters of right-to-work states say they generally boast lower unemployment, increased population gains and stronger job and household income growth. If the law is overturned, Steve Delie, director of labor policy at the Michigan-based Mackinac Center for Public Policy, says he "would expect the opposite to occur."

Ingrid Jacques, Columnist at USA Today

NATIONAL REVIEW

Michigan's Gretchen Whitmer Rewrites Her Covid-Response History

As the fog of war over state governments' foolish all-out battle against a coronavirus slowly lifts, we must keep an accurate accounting of their unprecedented restrictions of some of our basic civil rights.

Michael Van Beek, Director of Research

Detroit Free Press

Michigan teachers union, health plan pay \$226K over alleged COVID-19 loan violations

The Mackinac Center last week also said the MEA will pay its attorney fees and defended its claim. "They took these funds, for which they were clearly ineligible, while shuttered restaurants, stores, other businesses and their workers struggled to stay afloat," Mackinac Center President Joseph Lehman said in a statement.

*Todd Spangler, Detroit Free Press
Washington Correspondent*

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Michigan Moves to Repeal Right to Work

The Mackinac Center studied the policy last year, a decade after its enactment by former GOP Gov. Rick Snyder. The think tank found that right to work increased employment in several heavily unionized industries, such as manufacturing and construction.

The Wall Street Journal Editorial Board



What Do You Do Anyway? The Role of Think Tanks in Society

What is the role of a think tank? The song “I’m Just a Bill” from Schoolhouse Rock fails to explain.

Most people have always preferred to live together in society. From that voluntary association emerge agreements or norms to guide human interaction, which John Locke called a social contract. Humans have learned a lot over the millennia. Some things work. Others don’t. We test, experiment, learn. We determine what sort of governing bodies to create, how to select leaders and how much power to give them. These conclusions are codified into law.

Over time, new ideas come into fashion. Political coalitions shift. Politicians propose government programs to appeal to constituents. Previous programs are evaluated, expanded or scrapped. New injustices are discovered. Laws are modified.

Here the think tank enters the stage.

The Mackinac Center exists to promote liberty and opportunity for all people. We rely on a three-part theory of change: We develop free-market policies, we challenge government overreach, and we foster a climate of public opinion that encourages policymakers to act in the public interest.

“**We look to the future with optimism. To get there, we depend on forces for good outside the halls of government: civic institutions, religion, philanthropy and families.**”

Our stock-in-trade is research, and our recommendations flow from our research. As we have written: “Mackinac Center research incorporates the best understanding of economics, science, law, history and morality — moving beyond mere cost/benefit analyses.” We also use litigation, journalism and government outreach to secure wins.

Unchecked, government’s power tends to grow. Thus, we analyze and often support mechanisms to constrain it. Examples include free and fair elections, separation of powers, federalism, government transparency, spending limits and balanced budget requirements.

We look to the future with optimism. To get there, we depend on forces for good outside the halls of government: civic institutions, religion, philanthropy and families.

We do not cheer or oppose any political party. We convey our ideas to policymakers, regardless of their affiliation.

The Mackinac Center works with a network of like-minded organizations. We offer our expertise and advice, and we celebrate with our friends when they win.

We highlight the long-term effects of policy, unintended consequences, incentives and trade-offs between competing ideas.

We reach for the seemingly impossible. The Overton Window helps us understand the ideal versus the feasible.

Finally, we value open discourse as an essential ingredient of a free society. America today needs more debate and dialogue. (Read Russell Kirk and Matthew Continetti on the rich history of intellectual tussles among conservatives and libertarians.) Freedom of expression is essential for persuasion, and it is vastly superior to the alternative of domination through force or violence.

None of this is possible without supporters who share these values. Thank you. ■



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Reitz".

By Michael J. Reitz

Executive Vice President



From Teaching **Students** to Teaching **Lawmakers**

Meet **Molly Macek**, The Mackinac Center's Director of Education Policy

Whether as a student, teacher or administrator, Molly Macek has long been interested in education. This year, her interest in shaping the policies surrounding education led her to become the Mackinac Center's education policy specialist.

Molly lived in Marshall, Michigan until, at age 12, she moved with her family to the Washington, D.C., area. Her father, a veterinarian, took a public health job with the federal government. The family lived in Gaithersburg, Maryland, and Molly attended what she calls "excellent public schools."

After high school, Molly attended Georgetown University, studying biology and volunteering with an inner-city youth reading program. "For as long as I can remember, I wanted to be a teacher," she says. "I wanted to make a difference in the lives of children. And the public school route was really all I knew in the education field."

Molly's interest in teaching was displaced by a growing interest in science, so after university, she worked in a microbiology lab in the corporate world. But she returned to higher education,

working as a lab coordinator at The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. While there, she oversaw lab projects, performed research and maintained clinical databases. She also was inspired, once again, to pursue a career in education, and completed a master's degree, which culminated in a teaching internship at Einstein High School in Silver Spring, Maryland.

While completing her internship, Molly learned that a nearby private school needed a science teacher. It wasn't the first time she heard of the school. As a Johns Hopkins employee, she had met an intern, a high school student, in the lab. Molly was impressed with the maturity, curiosity, drive and acumen of this student. It was this student's school that had a job opening. Molly applied for the job at Notre Dame Preparatory School in Towson, Maryland, and worked there 14 years.

Notre Dame Prep is an independent, single-sex Catholic school, serving girls in grades 6 through 12. Molly taught high school science there, served as department chair, founded the school's "Women in Medicine" club, and directed its STEAM program.

"The amount of innovation the school had to accomplish to attract students, excel academically and remain sustainable was extraordinary. It showed me the level of excellence that schools can achieve, especially when spurred on by competition," Molly says.

During her time teaching, Molly also completed a doctor of education degree from Johns Hopkins. She wanted to move into school administration, so she moved with her family to Toledo, Ohio, where she served as principal at a secular private school.

“Choice and competition have the power to exponentially affect our kids in positive ways.”

"I really appreciate the positive impact administrators can have on a school or district," Molly says. "At this level, I hoped to be able to better support teachers and make changes that would improve the students' learning experience.

At the same time, I was becoming increasingly interested in how changes in public policy can have huge effects on teachers and students."

That led her to the Mackinac Center. She was drawn by the possibility of influencing policy that can have an effect on a whole state, or even the nation. And what better place to do this than in her home state of Michigan?

"Over my years working in schools as a researcher, teacher and administrator, I developed a deep appreciation for school choice," Molly says. "As a kid, I never knew choices like that existed, and choice and competition have the power to exponentially affect our kids in positive ways."

Molly is married to Mark, who is an attorney. They have one child who is in middle school and another who is in high school. ■



By Jarrett Skorup

Vice President for Marketing and Communications

Working with Partners to Bring Reliable Energy to the Midwest



The Ohio Legislature's decision in January to declare natural gas a "clean energy" source capped an intense year-long effort by the Mackinac Center and its partners to tell lawmakers across the country how important this fuel is to human well-being.

Buckeye State lawmakers drew on information from "The Truth About Natural Gas," a study co-published by the Mackinac Center's Environmental Policy Initiative and Northwood University's McNair Center for the Advancement of Free Enterprise and Entrepreneurship.

With state and federal governments rushing to "decarbonize" energy by moving the economy from coal and natural gas to solar and wind power, the report describes the value of natural gas to North America's economic, social, and environmental health and well-being.

The report came from a project that began last year, aimed at helping readers grasp the centrality of natural gas and understand how bad energy policy makes it more difficult for people to meet their everyday needs.

Governments around the country are destabilizing essential energy systems in the pursuit of a green ideology. A winter storm in Texas in February 2021 showed the nation what happens when the electrical system is made fragile by premature attempts to transition to energy sources like wind.

Texas is engaged in a long-term effort to shift its electricity generation capacity away from fossil fuels to heavily subsidized wind energy. The plan set up the state for an electrical grid failure when an extreme winter storm descended on generating facilities that were not properly weatherized. The already fragile electrical grid buckled, leaving millions of Texans suffering in the cold and dark.

Organizations that maintain and monitor the grid's reliability have repeatedly expressed their concerns about the push for rapid decarbonization of our electrical systems. Jim Robb, CEO of the North American Electric Reliability Corporation, warned of impending grid failures being brought on by "the disorderly retirement of older-generation" facilities. Robb's organization reiterated its warnings

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in November 2022, explaining that a rush to shutter reliable generation sources was leaving “a large portion of the North American [grid] at risk of insufficient electricity supplies during peak winter conditions.”

The Mackinac Center's collaborative research with the McNair Center — one of many efforts to work with like-minded organizations on projects that can advance shared goals — describes how natural gas serves as a central component of our energy supply and an essential component of many of the products we use every day. We show how gas also has played a key role in improving environmental outcomes for our industrialized society. ■



By Jason Hayes

*Director of Energy and
Environmental Policy*

Union Took Millions in PPP Funds

Mackinac Center lawsuit holds MEA accountable



The Mackinac Center has a long history of challenging overreach by the Michigan Education Association. The latest victory occurred in March, with the resolution of a lawsuit against the MEA and its affiliate, the Michigan Education Special Services Association, or MESSA. The suit alleged that the entities claimed over \$12 million in government COVID loans which they were ineligible to receive.

During the early days of the COVID pandemic, Congress approved the CARES act. This spending package included \$349 billion for loans through the paycheck protection program, or PPP. Congress established these loans to fund up to eight weeks of payroll and overhead expenses of qualifying organizations. The goal was to ensure that employers were able to retain employees

even during the economic downturn caused by government-imposed COVID restrictions. Only specific entities were eligible for these loans, and unions were not on the list.

That did not dissuade the MEA from securing over \$6 million in loans. The union falsely certified that it was an eligible organization. An MEA-affiliated insurance program, MESSA, received a similar loan. All told, the two claimed over \$12 million in government-insured loans that were supposed to be reserved for struggling businesses.

The Mackinac Center investigated and discovered both the MEA and MESSA were not entitled to the loans. In response, we sued both entities under the federal False Claims Act, which





authorizes lawsuits against those who submit false claims to the government. As the case progressed, the U.S. District Attorney for the Western District of Michigan chose to prosecute the case, which has now been settled. Both the MEA and MESSA have repaid the improper loans and have been assessed fines and penalties.

Unfortunately, the damage has already been done. These loans could have saved as many as 80 small businesses from closing. Instead, Michiganders across the state floundered while the MEA and MESSA took funds that rightfully belonged to someone else.

The Mackinac Center is proud to continue the tradition of holding powerful interests accountable for wrongdoing. In addition to



holding the MEA and MESSA accountable, we have pursued and obtained records from the state health department about the true number of nursing home deaths during the pandemic. We built on that momentum by challenging COVID penalties imposed by the state's workplace safety regulators. Most significant of all was the Mackinac Center's successful effort to persuade the Michigan Supreme Court to strike down Gov. Whitmer's COVID-era executive orders as unconstitutional. Whatever it takes, the we are always ready to defend the people of Michigan. ■



By Steve Delie
Director of Labor Policy

John and Jennie Stinson

Advocates for a Strong Work Ethic and Prosperity

John and Jennie Stinson believe the key to America's success is a strong work ethic. That conviction drives their support for the Mackinac Center.

High school sweethearts, John and Jennie earned degrees from the University of Michigan. As a graduate student in environmental sciences engineering, John developed AI software to quantify global wheat crop production by using satellites. This experience led to a 25-year career in software development.

After 9/11 disrupted the world economy, John and Jennie started over. John created several devices to improve medical imaging, while Jennie worked to place these products in health care facilities all over the world. The two designed 15 different devices between 2004 and 2017, moving from their garage to a 7,000-square-foot facility.

John has found that small companies can quickly respond to the needs of large health care facilities, and he now coaches start-up companies to do just that. But he is concerned that the state of Michigan no longer values the free-market system. Fostering innovation and competition is the hallmark of a healthy policy environment, John says, and it allows families, businesses of all sizes, and the human spirit to thrive.



John and Jennie have always valued a strong work ethic — John credits his father for instilling it in him — and both are concerned about its future. New policies, they say, increasingly discourage the work ethic that made America the most prosperous nation in the world.

John and Jennie believe the crux of the problem is that people — and too often our political leaders — view important choices through the lens of emotion. Schools are not teaching the skill of critical thinking anymore. The way forward, the Stinsons say, is to shift power from government to families by putting education funding in the hands of parents and guardians.

Good policies encourage the economy and population to grow, but the Stinsons see energy policies as one place where Michigan falls short. John is especially pleased with the work of Jason

Hayes, the Mackinac Center’s expert on energy and environmental issues, to educate consumers on sensible energy policies and counter voters’ tendency to embrace pleasant-sounding but unfruitful policies.

“We were refreshed,” said Jennie, describing the couple’s introduction to the Mackinac Center’s work. “It is so good to see there’s a group that holds the same values of individual rights and responsibility that we do, and is actively working to make our state into a better place.” ■



By Nathan Burgard

Donor Relations



NATIONAL

SchoolChoice

WEEK





Schools, Students, Mackinac Center Partners Celebrate National School Choice Week at Michigan Capitol

The Michigan Capitol’s Heritage Hall bustled with enthusiastic students and teachers who came to celebrate National School Choice Week on Jan. 26. The annual event, sponsored by the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, Parent Advocates for Choice in Education and other partner organizations, highlights the unique programming offered by a variety of school types throughout Michigan.

Approximately 200 people attended from eleven Michigan schools, including private schools (religious and otherwise), charter schools, online schools and magnet schools. Students from grades 6 to 12 enthusiastically displayed their recent projects and shared their schools’ innovative programs with guests and peers. Speakers included Chambria Mack, parent of a child who has thrived in an alternative school; Ryan McClellan, teacher at the Michigan International Prep School; and student representatives from the participating schools.

Many students shared stories about their educational experiences. Allysa, an eighth grader, beamed as she spoke about the sense of family at Light of the World Academy, a K-8 Montessori charter school. Vlad, an eleventh grader from Ukraine, expressed his gratitude for being warmly

welcomed by The Manoogian School. When he and his mother moved to America, his father stayed in Ukraine to fight in the military. Vlad appreciates having a nurturing school community during a difficult time.

Students from West Michigan Aviation Academy gave an overview of the impressive engineering and aviation curriculum at their charter school, where students can graduate with a pilot’s license. Representatives from virtual schools such as Michigan Online Schools and the Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy shared their strategies for keeping students engaged and thriving in a remote learning environment.

Students also had the opportunity to speak with legislators and visit the Senate gallery. The schools at the event were great examples of the valuable educational options made possible through school choice. ■



By Molly Macek
Director of Education Policy





PARTNER
FEATURE

Mackinac Center Addresses Corporate Welfare Deal in Big Rapids

An overflow crowd attended a Feb. 13 special meeting of the Big Rapids Township Board about state and local economic development policies and programs. I was there to speak, as was John Mozena, president of the Center for Economic Accountability.

The board of Mecosta County township had previously heard from economic development officials who pushed a \$700 million-plus subsidy deal for Gotion Inc., which makes batteries for electric vehicles.

I explained the awful track record of deals like this one, noting that the Mackinac Center studied 2,300 Michigan-specific deals across nine programs or program areas. The results showed no or negative impact in six of the nine. Where jobs were created, they came at an extremely high cost.

Audience members engaged me, along with Mozena and fellow audience members, in sometimes-contentious exchanges about the Gotion proposal. Some thought it was a welcome free lunch for the region. Others — small business owners — worried about a subsidized company hiring away their employees, noting it is very expensive to find and train new ones.





It's easy to view a state-subsidized deal as something that is "free" because people believe the company wouldn't have come without the subsidies. Research shows, however, that 75% to 98% of corporate relocations, expansions and job retentions would have happened without incentives.

Costs associated with such deals are often underreported. State officials claim that Gotion will create up to 2,350 new jobs, but in an era of low unemployment, it is likely those jobs will just be filled by people who are already gainfully employed nearby. And this is just if the company succeeds. A 2017 Foxconn Corp. deal in Wisconsin promised to bring more than 13,000 jobs by 2022, but to date, it can only lay claim to 1,000, if that.

Other audience members were concerned that a huge auto-related manufacturing plant would radically change the nature of the community and could harm the environment.

The Mackinac Center's presence at the meeting helped provide context for the debate over subsidizing jobs in Big Rapids.

After the meeting, several audience members said they were helped by the research materials and public testimony the Mackinac Center provided, noting it had changed their views. ■



By Michael LaFaive
*Senior Director of the Morey
 Fiscal Policy Initiative*

2017 Foxconn Deal



Jobs Promised
13,000

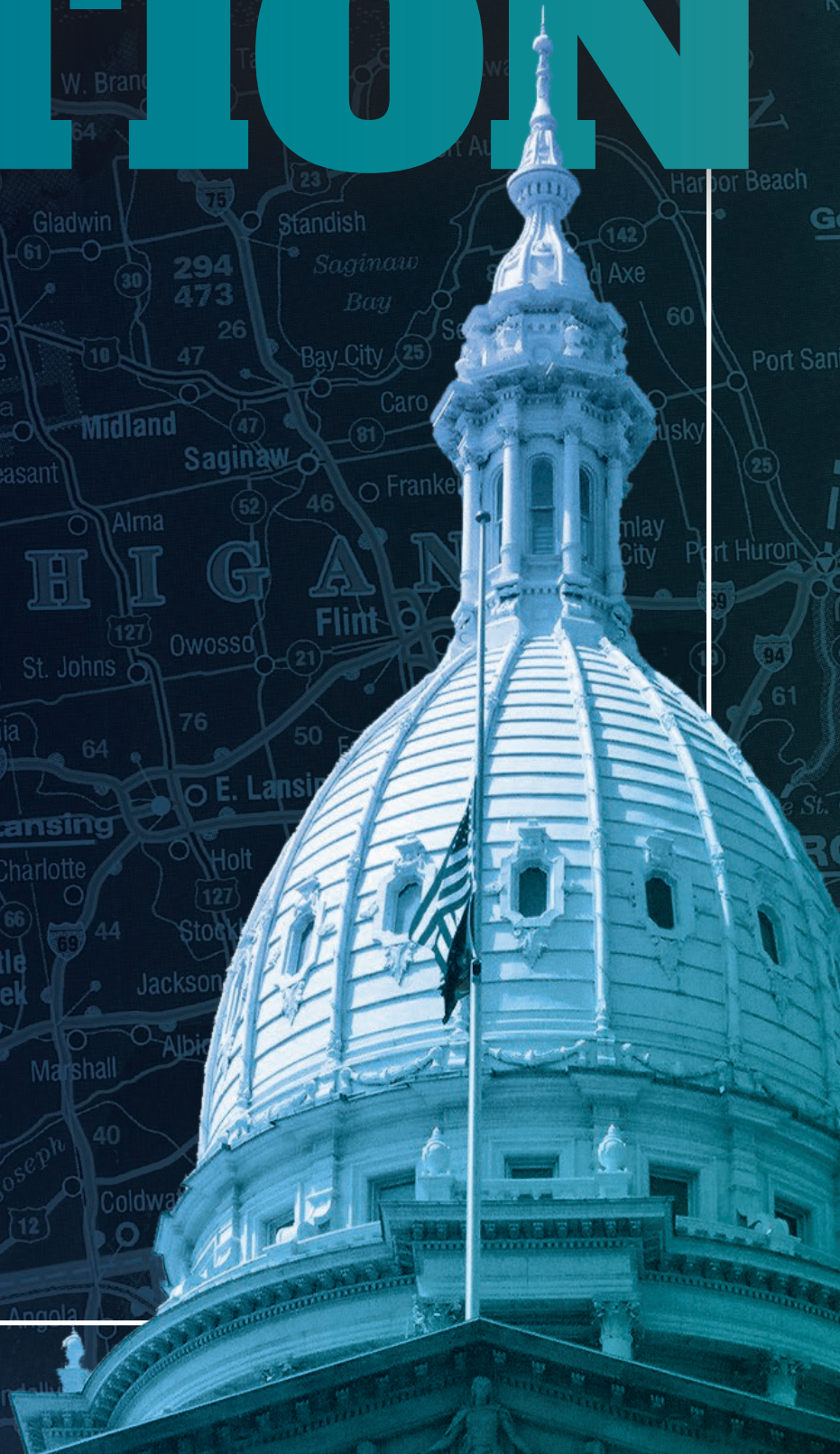


Jobs Delivered
1,000

A NEW TOOL FOR FREEDOM IN MICHIGAN

MACKINAC CENTER

ACTION



On February 3, the Mackinac Center for Public Policy announced that it had created Mackinac Center Action, a subsidiary organization that will operate under chapter 501(c)(4) of the federal Internal Revenue Code.

The Mackinac Center for Public Policy has existed as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational organization since its founding in 1987. Mackinac Center Action is exclusively dedicated to advancing the policy priorities of the Mackinac Center.

Mackinac Center Action provides new tools that will improve our ability to drive policy change in Michigan, through grassroots advocacy, community building and lobbying.

As Mackinac Center President Joe Lehman put it, “Mackinac Center Action exists to do the business of the Mackinac Center.”

The full suite of MCA activities will be developed and evolve over time, but some initial projects have begun.

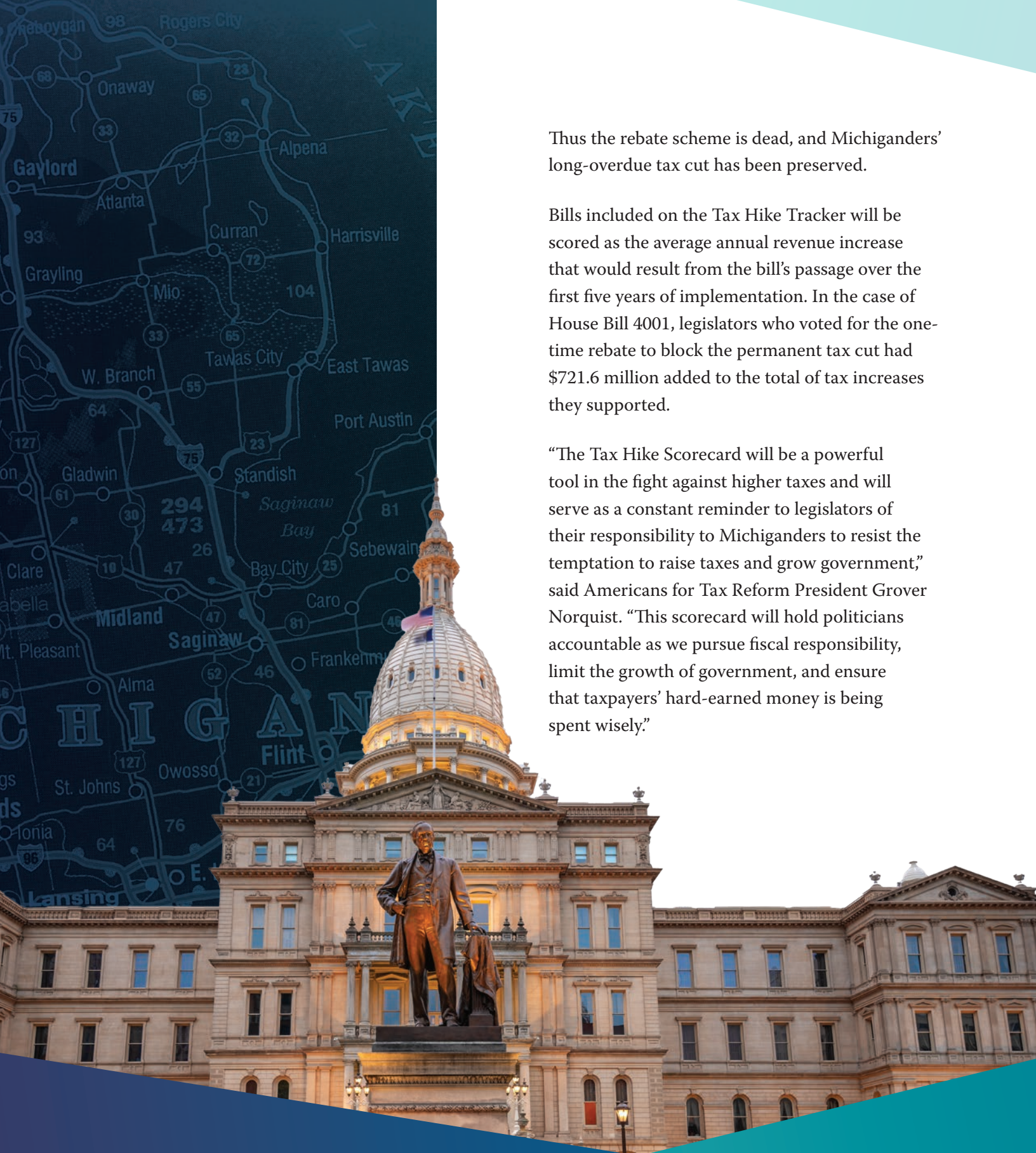
First, in collaboration with Americans for Tax Reform, the MCA website will host a Michigan Tax Hike Tracker. Modeled after the Mackinac Center’s Business Subsidy Scorecard, this webpage will track legislative votes to increase taxes and provide a running tally on how much of a total increase in taxes each legislator has voted for or against.

“**Mackinac Center Action provides new tools that will improve our ability to drive policy change in Michigan, through grassroots advocacy, community building and lobbying.**”

In the first month of the 102nd Michigan Legislature, the Tax Hike Tracker had its first vote: House Bill 4001. Michigan law as it existed at the start of 2023 had a trigger to cut the state’s personal income tax from 4.25% to 4.05% as soon as the state publishes its Annual Comprehensive Financial Report for the 2022 fiscal year.

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and legislative leadership conspired to create a new tax-rebate fund and backdate by five months a contribution to the fund for the purpose of preventing the tax reduction trigger from taking effect. Had their plan worked, it would have forestalled the 0.2 percentage-point drop in the personal income tax rate, causing residents to pay more than they would have otherwise.

The final bill was written in a way that the rebate language expired at the end of 2023; rebates from the fund could only have been paid if the Legislature granted the law immediate effect. While the bill passed both houses, a unified caucus of Republican senators blocked immediate effect.



Thus the rebate scheme is dead, and Michiganders' long-overdue tax cut has been preserved.

Bills included on the Tax Hike Tracker will be scored as the average annual revenue increase that would result from the bill's passage over the first five years of implementation. In the case of House Bill 4001, legislators who voted for the one-time rebate to block the permanent tax cut had \$721.6 million added to the total of tax increases they supported.

“The Tax Hike Scorecard will be a powerful tool in the fight against higher taxes and will serve as a constant reminder to legislators of their responsibility to Michiganders to resist the temptation to raise taxes and grow government,” said Americans for Tax Reform President Grover Norquist. “This scorecard will hold politicians accountable as we pursue fiscal responsibility, limit the growth of government, and ensure that taxpayers' hard-earned money is being spent wisely.”

ONLINE RESOURCES

In the coming weeks, Mackinac Center Action will launch its new website. Besides having pages for Mackinac’s various issue campaigns, it will include a revamped version of MichiganVotes.org. Among the new features will be more detailed analyses of legislators and committees, as well as new advocacy tools that will allow users to communicate directly with legislators on pending proposals.

“The launch of Mackinac Center Action is in keeping with our longstanding commitment to reach and empower more people, while encouraging government to act in the people’s best interest,” Lehman said. “The Center’s principles and priorities will steer the ways in which Mackinac Center Action engages with the public and with policymakers moving forward. We will work together with people of all backgrounds, regardless of party politics, to create a brighter and freer future for the generations to come.” ■



By David Guenther

*Vice President for
Government Affairs*



Mackinac.org/blog

Keep up-to-date on the latest policy stories from Mackinac Center analysts.



MichCapCon.com

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WorkersForOpportunity.org

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OpportunityMichigan.org

Want to get more engaged with public policy in Michigan? Opportunity Michigan is right for you.



FrankBeckmannCenterForJournalism.com

Keeping citizens informed with news and analysis that expose government overreach and abuse.

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REACHES SECOND MILESTONE

\$4,000,000

\$3,000,000

\$2,000,000

\$1,000,000



FRANK BECKMANN

CENTER FOR JOURNALISM



Co-hosts Jarrett Skorup and Kelly Cobb record “Mackinac on Michigan,” the Mackinac Center’s monthly public policy radio show on WJR-760, at the Fisher building in Detroit

Bigger government is not the solution to all the problems facing Michigan and our nation. The Beckmann Center is our concerted effort to spread that message further than ever before.

Established in 2022, the Frank Beckmann Center for Journalism grew steadily in its first year of operation. News stories, videos, radio and television appearances, transparency efforts and other projects help us put free-market policy solutions in front of key audiences. These products and activities also keep citizens informed about government activity so they can hold elected officials accountable.

This work would not have been possible without a \$3 million matching grant to support the launch and early growth of the Beckmann Center.

In 2022, over 1,200 donors contributed more than \$2 million toward the Beckman Center. Thanks to the generosity of our enthusiastic supporters, we reached the first stage of the challenge more than a year ahead of schedule. ■



By Jennifer Majorana
Director of Donor Communications

LAST YEAR SAW:

- 20%** increase in content produced by Michigan Capitol Confidential over the previous year
- 11K** views of four short-form policy videos that deliver a free-market message
- 44** guests interviewed on our monthly policy radio show, “Mackinac on Michigan”
- 1K** public records requests filed by two journalism interns

**HOW THE MICHIGAN MEDIA
COULD BE A BETTER WATCHDOG**

MICHIGAN'S WATCHDOG
CAPCON





A watchdog media is essential in preventing waste, fraud, favoritism and abuse in government. People tend to behave differently when they know they're being watched. Here are some values a watchdog media outlet should have.

 **Don't choose sides; be a skeptic**

Candor is a Mackinac Center value. We believe that “our work is enhanced when others review it,” to quote our statement of values. In that vein, we believe politicians and reporters both benefit when media are skeptical.

Better government results from watchdogs, not lap dogs.

“If your mother tells you she loves you, check it out,” cub reporters have been told for decades.

The point is to take nothing at face value. Don't guess. Don't assume. Don't “remember.” Find out. Seek independent verification of any fact. Don't take anyone's word for it.

Don't pick and choose which side carries truth and which side tells lies. Be skeptical toward anyone speaking from a government podium or spending taxpayer money.

“„ Quote the bill, not the spin

Legislators in Florida introduced a bill to strengthen parental rights in education. Critics labeled it the “Don't Say Gay” bill. That was catchy, so the media started using “Don't Say Gay,” too.

Just one problem: The four-page bill never said the word “gay” or banned anyone from saying it. The spin and the criticism of the bill was entirely divorced from the text of the bill itself.

When Floridians finally read the bill, they realized the media had lied to them. Lying to the public does not build trust.

News reporters will quote critics and activists, and they should. But first they should quote from the bill itself – and link to it, so people can read it themselves. The news is meant to print truth, not spin.

 **Show your work**

A reporter who writes about a document should link to it, or post a screenshot of the relevant section.

In the CapCon Guide to Congress, released in February, we showed readers, step-by-step, how to find their representatives in Congress and how to find out what they're doing.

What does your representative talk about on the House floor or introduce as legislation? What does your representative do while in Washington?

At CapCon we don't just want to build readers or whip up outrage. We want our readers to become engaged citizens. ■



By James Dickson

Managing Editor of Michigan Capitol Confidential



NATIONAL LABOR EFFORT **IS PAYING OFF**



WORKERS FOR OPPORTUNITY MAKES GREAT STRIDES IN 2022

The Mackinac Center’s national Workers for Opportunity initiative sees promising signs for state-based labor reform. In Florida, our years-long campaign reached a milestone when Gov. Ron DeSantis announced a new paycheck protection proposal for teachers. Dubbed a “Teacher’s Bill of Rights,” the plan echoes the core principle of Workers for Opportunity — protecting employee freedom and curbing union overreach.

The governor’s proposal would give teachers greater control over their paychecks. It would also protect against union politicking in the workplace by keeping union materials off school grounds. And it would require union officials to cover their own expenses. It would do this by eliminating the automatic deduction of union dues from teachers’ paychecks and by prohibiting the practice of “release time,” where employees carry out union duties while on the clock for their taxpayer-funded jobs.

In Tennessee and Oklahoma, Workers for Opportunity is working behind the scenes with local organizations and legislative leaders to tackle similar issues. State policymakers have sought our input as they develop legislative language that safeguards public employees’ First Amendment rights.

In yet another state, reports of union bullying offer a clear reminder of why advancing workers’ freedom is critical. Montana legislators recently tabled a labor reform bill aimed at securing public workers’ right to decide on union membership. The bill was reassigned from a favorable committee to an unfavorable committee, with no clear explanation.

“**Better still, this nation-leading legislation could embolden other states seeking to hold unions accountable.**”

Union intimidation loomed large as the issue heated up. One state legislator publicly acknowledged being threatened. Another member privately disclosed a similar experience to a representative of Workers for Opportunity.

The situation is just one more example of how union overreach and intimidation continue to undermine workplace freedom. Mackinac’s Workers for Opportunity initiative maintains our resolve to make 2023 a banner year for state reforms that safeguard worker freedoms. ■



By Lindsay Killen

*Workers for Opportunity
Senior National Advisor*



An Evening with the Mackinac Center

Hundreds of friends of liberty gathered in a single room. Old friends reuniting and new friendships being forged. Allies of the free market sharing a meal. And a thought-provoking talk from a notable keynote speaker to inspire, inform and invigorate you.

Interested?

Look no further than An Evening with the Mackinac Center, our annual gathering of free-market supporters to celebrate the cause of liberty. This year, we will gather on May 11 in Rochester, Michigan, with Alex Epstein as our keynote speaker. Alex is a leading national voice for a commonsense approach to powering our nation, one that is rooted

in facts rather than ideology. His website, EnergyTalkingPoints.com, gives a strong flavor of the kind of powerful message you will hear at this event.

You can rest assured that the evening will lead back to one simple fact: Society flourishes when the government gets out of the way. This is why the Mackinac Center for Public Policy exists and why we will never stop fighting for opportunity for all people.

We would be honored to have you join us at An Evening with the Mackinac Center in May. Please visit www.mackinac.org/events for more details or call our Events office at 989-698-1905. RSVP is required.

Thursday, May 11, 2023
at the Royal Park Hotel at Rochester, Michigan
Register at: www.mackinac.org/events

