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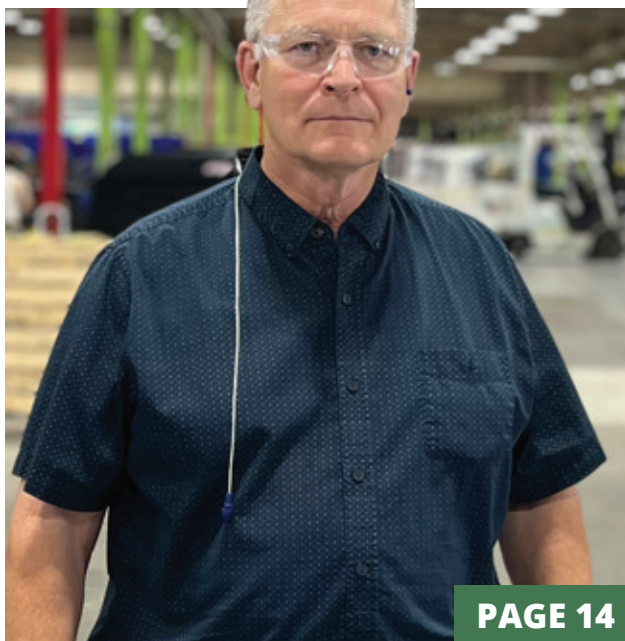
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WSJ | OPINION

Walz's Climate Policies Could Leave the Midwest in the Dark

"When subzero temperatures sweep across the Great Lakes every January, states will increasingly ask each other for power that doesn't exist. Ditto when heat waves crest in July and August."

Joshua Antonini, Research Analyst, and Jason Hayes, Director of Energy and Environmental Policy

The Detroit News

Cut Taxes to Make Michigan More Attractive

"Other states are becoming more attractive to industry and investment. Michigan is becoming more expensive."

Michael J. Reitz, Executive Vice President

RealClear Energy

Natural Gas is Our Clean Energy Standard

"Hardworking Americans deserve a sensible energy strategy that maximizes the use of our existing nuclear plants and our abundant supplies of natural gas."

Jason Hayes, Director of Energy and Environmental Policy, and Timothy G. Nash, director of the McNair Center at Northwood University

NATIONAL REVIEW

The UAW Puts Academics Ahead of Autoworkers

"Even when it claims to fight for workers, it often undermines their interests by making automakers uncompetitive and pushing production to nonunion states, overseas, or south of the border."

Terry Bowman, Ford employee and board member of the Institute for the American Worker, and Jarrett Skorup, Vice President for Marketing and Communications

The Washington Times

Service Employees International Union Steals from the Disabled to Fund Democrats

"Families with disabled loved ones aren't a money pot. Their lives are hard enough without having to fight labor bosses or fork over what money they have."

Patrick J. Wright, Vice President for Legal Affairs

NATIONAL REVIEW

An Unconstitutional Agency May Finally Meet Its End

"The SpaceX case before the district court now presents an opportunity for the legal system to continue down the path of restoring the separation of powers."

Stephen Delie, Director of Labor Policy



LETTER FROM
THE EXECUTIVE
VICE PRESIDENT

Fighting for the Forgotten

“We fight for the forgotten.”

My friend Charles Mitchell of the Commonwealth Foundation used this wonderful phrase during his remarks at a dinner in September. How true, and how necessary.

The Mackinac Center also fights for the men and women who encounter harmful policy or overzealous regulators.

The taxpayer whose income taxes go up because of a concerted effort by state officials to kill off a long-overdue tax cut.

Children who are condemned to schools that fail to teach them how to read.

Small business owners who struggle to get by while they watch the state give away billions to politically powerful and well-connected companies.

The fourth-generation restaurant owners who must close a business that’s nearly 100 years old because of the uncertainties of labor costs and inflation.

The waitress whose take-home pay will go down because of policy changes that affect her tips.

The single mother in Detroit whose electric bill keeps going up.

The man returning to society from prison who is trying to set his life straight, if only he can find a job.

Photo by Adobe Stock

“The Mackinac Center also fights for the men and women who encounter harmful policy or overzealous regulators.”

Employees and patients of the medical center that was closed during the state’s aggressive lockdowns.

The hairdresser who was criminally charged for cutting hair during the same lockdowns.

Parents of disabled children who discovered they had been unionized without a choice by a law that allowed a union to skim off the public aid intended for their children.

The mother whose school board reported her to the U.S. Department of Justice because she dared complain about its failures to educate her special-needs child.

The mother who asked to see a school’s curriculum, only to be stonewalled for months.

Families who want to use an education savings account to enroll their children in a private school, only to be barred by the state constitution.

Medical professionals who must jump through an additional regulatory hoop of implicit bias training.

The young man in Saginaw barred from pursuing his dream of becoming a massage therapist because of costly licensing requirements.

The entrepreneur charged with a misdemeanor by city officials because he rented out his house on Airbnb.

The bed-and-breakfast owner who was forced to

pay fees for marketing services that he did not need and that brought little benefit to his inn.

The 24-year-old kindergarten teacher who tried to leave her union, only to have union officials threaten to ruin her credit.

The members of a Detroit family whose rental property was seized by Wayne County after they unknowingly underpaid their property tax bill by less than \$150.

A high-performing charter school in Detroit whose expansion plans were blocked by the local school district.

The young couple who hoped to fund college tuition for their children by renting out a house, only to discover crippling rental regulations proposed in Lansing.

These are real people who need our help. If you and I don’t fight for them, who will? ■



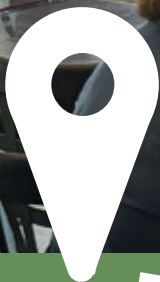
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael J. Reitz".

By Michael J. Reitz

Executive Vice President



Statewide Summer Forums Tackle Ways to Help Michigan Grow



Experts from the Mackinac Center for Public Policy hit the road this summer to host a series of Summer Policy Forums across Michigan, discussing the theme “How to Get Michigan Growing Again.” These forums addressed a pressing concern: Michigan’s stagnant population, which remains lower than it was 20 years ago.

The Mackinac Center’s Michael LaFaive and Michael Van Beek were featured speakers at all four events,

sharing their insights on Michigan’s economic challenges. They were joined by notable guest speakers Jonathan Williams, chief economist and executive vice president of policy at the American Legislative Exchange Council, addressed a luncheon in Sterling Heights and a happy hour in Wyandotte. In Traverse City and Battle Creek, Meg Tuszynski, assistant director of the Bridwell Institute for Economic Freedom, provided her perspective on what drives greater economic freedom across the country.



Photos by MCGPP

Throughout the forums, speakers emphasized that proven policy solutions can help Michigan grow. If Michigan’s lawmakers follow the lead of high-growth states such as Florida, Tennessee and Texas, the policies they enact will make Michigan a place that retains current residents and attracts new ones. The changes the speakers pointed out include cutting tax rates, making labor market regulations reasonable, and crafting budgets with sustainable levels of government spending.

Attendees left with a clear message: Michigan’s policies must be rethought before the state can thrive. While challenges remain, Michigan’s future can be bright with the right policy approaches. ■



By Holly Wetzel
Director of Public Relations

SHORTING THE GREAT LAKES GRID

MACKINAC CENTER SHINES A LIGHT ON BLACKOUT-INDUCING POLICIES



Michigan residents face an urgent threat to electricity supplies, the Mackinac Center shows in a new report.

“Shorting the Great Lakes Grid,” first excerpted in The Wall Street Journal in August, provides context for citizens who want to understand why their electricity will become more expensive and suffer more shortages.

“We are retiring dispatchable generating resources at a pace and in an amount that is far too fast and far too great, and it is threatening our ability to keep the lights on,” Federal Energy Regulatory Commissioner Mark Christie testified to the U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee last year. Grid operators, grid regulators and electricity reliability watchdog organizations agree on this point.

Michigan will find that replacing reliable coal and nuclear plants with weather-dependent wind turbines and solar panels will leave the state without enough electricity to meet its people’s needs, forcing the state to buy from regional electricity markets to keep the lights on.

Unfortunately, each state expects to be able to buy from its neighbors’ surpluses. If every state pursues these same net zero policies, there will be nothing to fall back on.

The Midcontinent Independent Systems Operator, the grid operator for much of the Midwest, expects that by 2032, not a single one of the Great Lakes states in its territory will have enough electricity supply to meet demand.

“Shorting the Great Lakes Grid” looks at seven of the Great Lakes states (Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania) to analyze the policies of their governments and largest utilities.

We published the report with input from several other members of the State Policy Network, including the

Center of the American Experiment, MacIver Institute for Public Policy, Illinois Policy Institute, Buckeye Institute, and the Commonwealth Foundation for Public Policy.

With approachable writing, regional focus and a national release, “Shorting the Great Lakes Grid” offers an on-ramp for interested citizens to understand the problem. Policy change requires an engaged populace, and engaging the populace starts with education. If our energy policies don’t change, the grid will fail us. When the grid fails, when blackouts occur more frequently and utility bills skyrocket, people can turn to the Mackinac Center to understand why — and keep it from happening again. ■

“If every state pursues these same net zero policies, there will be nothing to fall back on.”



By Joshua Antonini
Research Analyst



**MACKINAC
STAFF
PROFILE**



**‘In America, You Have
the Chance to Make
Something of Yourself,
and Government Shouldn’t
Get in the Way of That’**



A Profile of Ryan Rickel, Director of Strategic Partnerships

Ryan Rickel's libertarian core comes from growing up in the country with a union electrician father and an entrepreneurial mother.

"Both of my parents worked a ton, and we were expected to be self-sufficient," Ryan says.

He was born and raised in Wisconsin, near Green Bay. (Mackinac Center supporters in Northern Michigan will be pleased to hear that he is a Packers fan.)

His parents divorced when he was young, and he and his sister were raised in a middle-class household. But Grandma lived nearby and helped raise them.

"My Grandma never missed church and directed the choir for 40 years — which meant I sang in the choir," Ryan says.

He was big into sports, playing golf, football and hockey in high school.

"Like every kid, I wanted to be a professional athlete. But after maxing out at 5'9," that was not going to happen," he says with a grin. Still, he ended up as a punter at the University of Wisconsin—Stevens Point, a Division III school, before transferring to Ferris State University in Big Rapids, Michigan, where he got a degree in business marketing.

After school, he moved to Chicago while his future wife Luann did her graduate work to become an optometrist. In Chicago, Ryan worked in real estate and got a taste of politicians using the government to enrich themselves.

"That's the period of my life where I realized the government is not your friend and is mostly there to control your life," he says. "In almost every industry

in Chicago, the government has its hand in your pocket. People receiving the same services pay wildly different rates. Low-level tickets are heavily prosecuted while major crimes go unpunished, and businesses must get politically connected to survive while entrepreneurship is oppressed."

The Rickels moved to Saginaw to be near Luann's family. Ryan worked at the railroad in Vassar before going into sales. That experience helped immensely when he came on board the Mackinac Center, where he now sells the concept of freedom.

When asked to describe his job, Ryan says, "Saving the world."

"We exist to stop government overreach, protect the individual from an overbearing state, promote entrepreneurs who want to compete on a level playing field. In America, you have the chance to make something of yourself through hard work, and the government shouldn't get in the way of that."

The core of his job is finding and reaching out to donor prospects — people who believe in the Mackinac Center's mission, see the problems confronting the state of Michigan and want to do something about it.

Ryan lives in Saginaw County's Thomas Township with his wife and, as he puts it, four "beautiful, healthy, smart, pain-in-the-butt kids." ■



By Jarrett Skorup

*Vice President for Marketing
and Communications*



Photo by Adobe Stock

Michigan Capitol Confidential Slices Up the Pork in 2025 Budget

When lawmakers finalized Michigan's \$82.5 billion 2025 budget behind closed doors, they handed out \$1 billion to unvetted projects favored by politicians.

The handouts range from \$10 million for a Frankenmuth youth sports complex to \$2 million for a project to flip a former corrections site in Grand Traverse County into a whiskey business.

Michigan Capitol Confidential is breaking those projects down one by one.

CapCon has written more than a dozen stories about what we call pork: \$13 million to museums, \$9.1 million to religious organizations and \$2.3 million to orchestras.

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer touted her "kitchen table budget" that gives \$25 million to electric vehicle charging stations, sends \$10 million to the Potter Park Zoo in Lansing and spends \$3 million on e-bikes.



CapCon discovered that a Saginaw lawmaker earmarked \$1.9 million to fix an elementary school pool. The costs of other projects added up quickly.

By the time the 2024-25 fiscal year is over, the state will have whittled a \$9 billion surplus down to \$350 million, CapCon reported.

We raised questions about whether the budget giving \$250,000 to a private school violated the 1970s Blaine Amendment.

The 2025 budget is “totally out of whack,” Rep. Cam Cavitt, R-Cheboygan, told CapCon.

“Taxpayers want quality schools, safe communities, and smooth, stable infrastructure,” Cavitt said. “But the Democrat majority blew funds on zoos, pro baseball stadiums, theaters, and other completely unnecessary pork projects, many of them in a few politically connected areas. I voted against this waste of tax dollars that should have been invested in real priorities or returned to the people of Michigan.”

Whether CapCon is shedding light on what’s in the state’s budget or drawing attention to legislation moving in Lansing, we are dedicated to ensuring that you know how your tax dollars are being spent. ■



By Scott McClallen

*Michigan Capitol
Confidential Reporter*

ONLINE RESOURCES



MichCapCon.com

Michigan Capitol Confidential reports with a free-market news perspective.



WorkersForOpportunity.org

Advancing the liberty of employees across the country and protecting First Amendment rights.



Mackinac.org/MCLF

Our public interest law firm advances individual freedom and the rule of law in Michigan.



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.



MichiganVotes.org

Track every bill, amendment and roll call vote in the Michigan Legislature from 2001 to today.



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'It's fun to watch things grow'



Paul Aultman learned life skills growing up with two brothers on his family's farm in Midland County. His father worked full time at Dow Chemical. He also farmed in the evenings, often late into the night, to the chagrin of his neighbors. No matter his father's schedule, Paul's mom made sure the family had dinner together almost every night.

Farming was Paul's first love, and he attended MSU to learn more about agriculture. Upon returning home from college, he worked the farm and took on some accounting tasks for local businesses during the winter months. This experience led to an opportunity for a job in plastics manufacturing. He accepted the offer.

After 10 years working for this company, Paul got a chance to buy a different plastics manufacturing plant in Standish. It had six employees and no clients, but Paul is a strong believer in God, and he took a leap of faith. Almost immediately after closing the deal, he got his first client. Now, 28 years later, Vantage Plastics employs more than 300 people across five business units.

Forming better lives is part of Vantage's mission statement, and Paul enjoys seeing employees work their way up from the floor to become plant managers and designers. "It's fun to watch things grow, whether it be crops or people," he says.

His advice for entrepreneurs is to seek counsel from everyone, including banks giving you loans and the auditor going over your financials. Paul also cautions those who listen to leave their stress at the office. You should always be thinking about your business, but when you are home, you need to be fully engaged.

Paul started supporting the Mackinac Center because individuals and private businesses spend their money better than the government does. The bureaucracy has become so out of control that even politicians have a hard time reining it in. The government doesn't innovate. Entrepreneurs do, and we should let consumers pick the winners and losers.

Think tanks use hard data to back up their policy recommendations, while the government uses a feel-good approach. Paul hopes that people will look at what is underneath the feel-good policy positions imposed on us by the government. ■



By Ryan Rickel

Director of Strategic Partnerships

Four Numbers Showing the Michigan Education Association's

HUGE DECLINE

Nine offices. 60 employees. 40,000 members. \$60 million.

These four numbers show the enormous decline in the Michigan Education Association's power and influence. Since its peak 15 years ago, the MEA has closed nine offices and laid off 60 internal employees. That's the direct result of losing 40,000 members and \$60 million in revenue.

The MEA is the state's largest teachers union and by far the largest union representing government workers in Michigan. It has used its power for politics and coercion. For decades, the MEA gained power largely because state law required most school employees to join as members or pay fees to it. Those who refused would lose their jobs.

When workers tried to leave the union, the MEA fought hard to keep forcing them to pay. The union has bullied and threatened members who tried to resign, and it sent

thousands of people to collections after they tried to stop paying.

Nearly all of the MEA's political spending has gone to Democrats and left-wing causes. Even when half of its membership voted Republican and claimed to be conservative, the union didn't care.

That changed in 2012. That's when Michigan became a right-to-work state. Teachers and other workers could no longer be fired for fully resigning from a labor union. In 2018, the U.S. Supreme Court's *Janus v. AFSCME* decision cemented this law for public employees by ruling they had a First Amendment right not to pay dues or fees to government unions.

The Mackinac Center has been fully engaged in the fight to protect the rights of teachers and other school employees. For over a decade, we argued for a right-to-work law. We highlighted stories of teachers who wanted to do their jobs without the influence of a far-left political union. We sued on behalf of dozens of school employees for their right to resign. We filed a brief in the *Janus* case arguing for the constitutional rights of public workers nationwide. And we've launched and executed major campaigns to explain and defend the opt-out rights of workers in Michigan and beyond.

Your support makes this possible, and the results are undeniable: 9, 60, 40,000 and \$60 million. ■



By Jarrett Skorup

Vice President for Marketing and Communications



BY THE NUMBERS

9

Offices closed

60

Employees let go

40,000

Members resigned

\$60 Million

Lost revenue



SCHOOL BOARDS NEED SOLUTIONS FOR NEW LABOR ENVIRONMENT

“The Mackinac Center will equip school boards with the tools they need to negotiate the best policies.”

Michigan’s schools still trail those of other states in recovering from pandemic-era learning losses. New state labor laws threaten to set students back even further, making the work of school boards even more challenging.

But school boards are getting help from the Mackinac Center as they navigate the new laws and try to keep our students on a path to success. The Solutions for School Boards project gives school boards resources to strengthen their hands in bargaining over issues they have not had to consider for more than a decade.

Since 2011, certain contract terms, including teacher placement, performance evaluations, layoffs, disciplinary procedures and merit pay, have been excluded from collective bargaining.

The Michigan Legislature enacted these extensive labor reforms to grant school officials greater authority over their schools and improve our students’ quality of education. The most significant reforms ensured that personnel policies would emphasize teacher effectiveness over seniority and required decisions to be tied to teacher performance.



Photo by Adobe Stock

These reforms did not last long. Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and her allies in the Legislature undid them last year. The policies that determine layoffs, merit pay and other important decisions must now be negotiated at the bargaining table. Teachers unions pushed for the 2023 legislation, and they are prepared for this new reality. But many school boards may be caught unawares, and they must be ready to negotiate previously prohibited subjects that influence the quality of teachers who staff their schools. The students' learning experience depends on it.

Districts don't need to revert to pre-reform policies, nor should they. While the 2023 legislation will require some changes to collective bargaining agreements, school boards should fight to retain and improve their existing policies to the fullest extent allowed by law.

Previously prohibited subjects that can now be bargained over include:



CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS



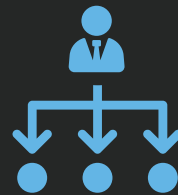
TEACHER DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES



PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS



TEACHER LAYOFF AND RECALL PROCEDURES



TEACHER PLACEMENT DECISIONS



CONTRACTING OUT NONINSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES TO PRIVATE SERVICE PROVIDERS



Photo by Adobe Stock

The Mackinac Center will equip school boards with the tools they need to negotiate the best policies. A new feature on our website, “Solutions for School Boards,” helps school officials navigate the new collective bargaining landscape and keep student achievement at the heart of decision-making.

School boards may consult two new Mackinac Center studies, “The Tables Have Turned: The New Landscape for Collective Bargaining in Michigan Schools,” and “Going in Reverse: Michigan School Officials Should Resist Backtracking on Obama-Era Reforms.” The website will also maintain an updated database of collective bargaining agreements from all Michigan school districts, along with model policies, collective bargaining resources, and other helpful materials.

Student success depends in part on having the most qualified and effective teachers in our schools. School boards should not return to old policies that prevent schools from attracting, retaining and nurturing

talented educators. Students will be at risk of falling even further behind if this happens. The Mackinac Center is proud to support school board members who fight for policies that help Michigan students, even in the face of union pressure. ■



By Stephen Delie

Director of Labor Policy



By Molly Macek

Director of Education Policy

Rhode Island Teacher Wins Settlement in Union Retaliation Case



Photo by Adobe Stock

A Rhode Island teacher who faced retaliation for opting out of union membership won a \$60,000 settlement in September with the help of the Mackinac Center Legal Foundation. This case underscores the importance of protecting the freedom of teachers to decide whether to belong to a union without fear of losing their jobs.

John Lancellotta began teaching Spanish and Italian for West Warwick Public Schools in 2018. Lancellotta, who previously taught for 12 years in another district, had consistently received excellent performance reviews and no complaints from students, parents or colleagues. Despite this strong record, his decision to leave the West Warwick Teachers' Alliance in December 2019 appeared to prompt the district to terminate his employment.

Lancellotta first informed his union representative that he was considering opting out in February 2019. The representative warned him that the district had not employed a non-union teacher in at least 27 years. After that conversation, Lancellotta was asked to meet with his department head, who was an active member of two union committees, along with the union representative.

Later that year Lancellotta left the West Warwick Teachers' Alliance. Within a week his department head requested a meeting with administrators that resulted in the district not renewing his contract, effectively firing him.

The Mackinac Center, along with Rhode Island attorney Joseph Larisa Jr., filed a federal lawsuit in 2022

arguing that the district violated Lancellotta's First and Fourteenth Amendment rights. The lawsuit alleged that Lancellotta was fired in retaliation for his leaving the union, a blatant violation of his constitutional rights.

An administrative appeal revealed that the decision to terminate Lancellotta was based solely on the recommendation of the department head and active union members. Further investigation uncovered close coordination between the district's attorneys and the union's legal team, raising concerns about fairness in the process.

Before the parties reached a settlement, the judge determined that if Lancellotta was terminated for exercising his First Amendment right not to have to pay a union, it would constitute a First Amendment violation. This was the first time in the nation that this has been ruled on since the U.S. Supreme Court held in *Janus v. AFSCME* that public employees have a constitutional right to refuse to pay dues or fees to public sector unions.

Although the district denies wrongdoing, this settlement reminds us that public sector employees have a right to make their own decisions about union membership and should not face punishment for exercising those rights. The Mackinac Center remains vigilant in ensuring that unions and districts uphold teachers' constitutional rights. ■



By Derk Wilcox
Senior Attorney



Photo by Adobe Stock

SCHOLARS ASSEMBLE: MACKINAC ACADEMIC SUMMIT DEBUTS

The Mackinac Center hosted its first annual Scholars Summit in August. The 17 attendees included professors from different Michigan universities and other scholars with Michigan ties. The group gathered at the Center's Freedom Embassy, kitty-corner from the Capitol in downtown Lansing.

The summit gave Center staffers a chance to develop closer relationships with scholars who support our work and mission. Many attendees were members of our Board of Scholars. Others were new to the Mackinac Center but interested in partnering with us. We currently have 47 members, but incoming members will push that number over 50.

Another purpose for the event was to allow attendees to develop new relationships or enhance existing ones. The summit was a smashing success from this standpoint: Scholars have already informed us of several collaborations that came directly from their interactions at the meeting.

The group of scholars represented 11 different Michigan schools, including Hillsdale College, Northwood University, Michigan State University,

Kalamazoo College, Northern Michigan University and Central Michigan University.

Attendees learned about the history of the Mackinac Center and how we influence policy change. A core function of the Center is to translate the findings of academic research, especially in the field of economics, for the broader public. There's a clear symbiotic opportunity for the Center and scholars who want their research to reach a wider audience and shape Michigan policy.

Scholars attending the summit also learned how to work more effectively with the media. Holly Wetzel, our director of public relations, led this training. The Center has decades of experience delivering its message through major media outlets in the state, while most professors never receive training from their universities in these matters.

This was the inaugural edition of what will become an annual event for the Mackinac Center. We hope to grow the number of attendees next year and keep building relationships with scholars in Michigan. ■



By Michael Van Beek
Director of Research

STATE POLICY NETWORK

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JIM WALKER WINS INAUGURAL PHILANTHROPY IMPACT AWARD

Jim Walker believes that giving brings happiness.

Walker has led the Mackinac Center's fundraising efforts for almost ten years, helping the Center grow its annual budget from more than \$5 million in 2016 to more than \$10 million in 2018. Our 2023 budget reached nearly \$12 million.

State Policy Network recognized his contributions in 2024 with its inaugural Philanthropy Impact Award, created to honor an individual who has raised the bar in philanthropy. The call for nominations reached more than 60 organizations and required recommendations from both colleagues and donors.

Walker accepted the inaugural honor at the State Policy Network Annual Meeting in Arizona this August. "First are the Mackinac Center's donors, who have taught me so much," Walker told the crowd. He recounted a conversation with a group of donors on the topic of generosity and happiness. "Hope and joy push out discouragement," one affirmed. Another said, "Your life is meant to be a gift to others." Those statements challenged him and inspired gratitude.

Walker also thanked his wife, Kelly, as well as colleagues at the Mackinac Center and partner organizations.

"We have so many more talented people committed to making a difference," added James Hohman, director of fiscal policy at the Mackinac Center. "We've found



new ways to win. And we're working better with more people. Our growth and gains wouldn't have happened without Jimmy."

“Hope and joy push out discouragement.”

Walker emphasized that every act of generosity is an act of hope in a better future. He's honored to receive the first Philanthropy Impact

Award. "So many people have been a gift to my life," he said. "Let's think of our work as giving donors reasons to be even more generous, which will increase their hope and happiness. That is the gift we owe them." ■



By Jennifer Majorana
Senior Director of Advancement

HOLDING THE WHITE HOUSE TO A CONSTITUTIONAL STANDARD

The Biden-Harris administration refuses to give up its repeated illegal attempts to give away hundreds of billions of dollars by canceling student loans. The Mackinac Center filed two lawsuits challenging two of the older schemes, but most of the recent action is on the Saving on a Valuable Education Plan.

SAVE was one of the responses to the U.S. Supreme Court's 2023 decision in *Biden v. Nebraska*, which prevented the administration from unlawfully canceling the debt of 20 million student loan borrowers and lowering the debt of another 23 million at a cost of \$430 billion.

Under SAVE, the administration is again trying to appropriate money without the authorization of Congress. This time the amount is \$475 billion. Several lawsuits against this plan are ongoing. Recently, two U.S. circuit courts and the Supreme Court reviewed the question of whether injunctions against SAVE should continue. The Mackinac Center filed amici to the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals and to the Supreme Court in support of an injunction. The Supreme Court upheld an injunction issued by the Eighth Circuit Court and ordered it to decide the merits of the case quickly. The Mackinac Center has since filed an amicus brief in that case.

On Sept. 3, 2024, seven states filed a lawsuit to stop the Biden-Harris administration's attempt to perform an



Photo by Adobe Stock

“The Mackinac Center is fighting hard to prevent these violations of the separation of powers.”

end run on the Eighth Circuit injunction. This latest attempt at mass illegal cancellation of debt would require third-party student loan servicers to have begun canceling student loans as early as that same week. According to the complaint in that lawsuit:

“[The Education Secretary] knows that ‘the States cannot turn back the clock on any loans that have already been forgiven.’ . . . So it does not matter how many rules he breaks in the process, so long as he forgives billions of dollars in debt before the courts stop him.”

Student loans and college costs are undoubtedly important issues. There are plenty of economic reasons against widespread debt forgiveness, to say nothing of its unfairness to those who have paid their own loans or chosen not to incur college debt. But if the administration continues to push for debt forgiveness, it should accept that this policy must be implemented constitutionally. The Mackinac Center is fighting hard to prevent these violations of the separation of powers. ■



By Patrick J. Wright

Vice President for Legal Affairs

The Mackinac Center’s work, including this magazine, is made possible by the Mackinac Center Board of Directors:

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Mackinac Center's Legacy Society: Planning for Life Workshops

The Mackinac Center believes that everyone has a legacy. The question is, will yours flow from a plan, or will it come by default? To help you create a thoughtful and intentional legacy, we proudly offer **Planning for Life** estate planning workshops.

Each year, we host three workshops exclusively for our members and friends across Michigan. These events provide a unique opportunity to learn about estate planning in a comfortable setting with a small group. Whether you're just beginning to think about your will or need to update your current estate plan, these workshops will leave you energized and equipped to collaborate with your own professional advisers.

This past summer, we had the pleasure of hosting our workshops at three locations:

- The Gandy Dancer, located in the heart of Ann Arbor
- Birchwood Farms Golf and Country Club in beautiful Harbor Springs, graciously hosted by our friends Dr. and Mrs. Zako
- Cooper's Hawk Winery and Restaurant in Kentwood

Attendees hear firsthand from our expert presenter, attorney Gregory T. Demers of Warner Norcross + Judd LLP, who provides details on wills, trusts, charitable giving and tax considerations. We encourage everyone to come with questions and receive an answer in real time from a knowledgeable professional.

These events are completely free, and no one will ask you to buy anything. They're our gift to you as a valued supporter or friend of the Mackinac Center.

If you were unable to attend one of our 2024 **Planning for Life** workshops, please email Nicole Beck-Irrer at beck@mackinac.org to receive a personal invitation to our 2025 sessions.

We look forward to helping you design your legacy with confidence and care. ■



By Nicole Beck-Irrer
Director of Advancement