

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2024

# IMPACT

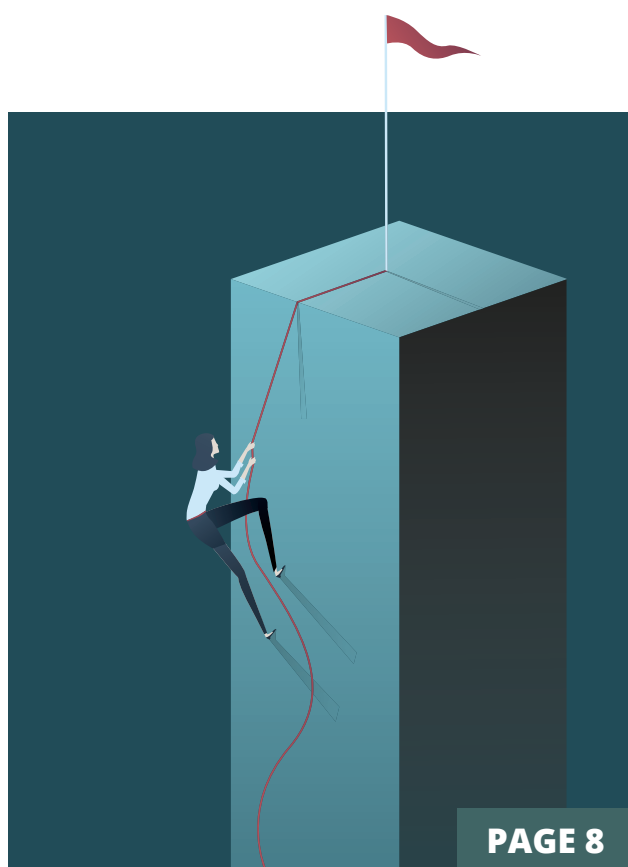
Want Michigan to become  
a growth state once again?

**WE HAVE  
A BLUEPRINT  
FOR THAT**

**PAGE 16**



- 3 **Mackinac in the Media**
- 4 **20 Lessons from 30 Years in the Freedom Movement**
- 6 **Government Transparency: It Shouldn't Take a Lawsuit**
- 8 **Michigan Can Do More for Social Mobility, Mackinac Center, Archbridge Institute Find**



- 10 **How Free Are We? Where Michigan Ranks on the Freedom Scale**
- 12 **Leading in Cheer and Charity**
- 14 **A Tale of Two States: What Michigan Can Learn from Florida's Education Savings Accounts**



- 16 **Want Michigan to Become a Growth State Once Again? We Have a Blueprint for That**
- 19 **Congress, States, Could Get New Opportunity to Revisit Labor Law**
- 20 **Investigation Reveals Dissatisfaction with Union Township Land Requirements**
- 22 **Helping Preserve Freedom Through Giving and Collaboration**
- 24 **Election Changes Lansing Dynamic for 2025**
- 26 **No Union Necessary: Mackinac Center Exposes the Truth Behind Homecare Unionization Scheme**
- 28 **People Behind the Cause**



**MACKINAC  
IN THE  
MEDIA**

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

### Whitmer's Home-Care Cash Grab

"Each member who joins would owe the union about 2.75% of the stipend. The union stands to collect up to \$13 million a year, according to the Mackinac Center for Public Policy."

*The Wall Street Journal Editorial Board*

## THE HILL

### One Year After the UAW Strike, Michigan is Worse Off

"The UAW failed its members, who are suffering because of union leaders' foolish actions and divided focus."

*Jarrett Skorup, Vice President for Communications and Marketing*



### Corporate Subsidies Are Out of Control

"Selective subsidies fail to create jobs and are unfair to both the taxpayers who have to foot the bill and the businesses that must compete with subsidized companies. Economists studying the economic effects of corporate welfare confirm that it just doesn't work."

*James Hohman, Director of Fiscal Policy*



### The Empty Promises of Industrial Policy

"There's no evidence anywhere that pursuing top-down industrial policy produces better economic results."

*Jarrett Skorup, Vice President for Communications and Marketing*

## The Detroit News

### Lawmakers Must Reform FOIA During Lame Duck

"FOIA reform is 'The Thing Everyone Says We Should Do.' The governor says we should do this. Lawmakers in both parties agree. They have the time. They have pledged support. Who will show leadership?"

*Michael Reitz, Executive Vice President*

### Patrick Wright on 9&10 News



### 'Nonpartisan' Michigan Supreme Court Races Could Have Political Consequences

Oct. 29, 2024





## 20 Lessons from 30 Years in the Freedom Movement

Thirty years ago this January, I quit my perfectly good engineering job to join the save-the-world business. Three decades at anything prompts retrospection. Here are a few things I know now about public policy and the freedom movement that I did not know in 1995.

- It's better to be for people than against things.
- Good ideas are not inherently persuasive. Even brilliant ideas must be sold. Without persuasion, ideas are merely academic.
- Persuasion in public policy must reach beyond logic. Effective persuasion engages the mind (logos) as well as the heart (pathos) and rests on credible authority (ethos).
- Most lawmakers are not primarily interested in the details of public policy. They find other parts of the job more attractive. This creates obstacles and opportunities for us.
- Finding a person to illustrate a policy point is more powerful than explaining a policy concept. Our research analyzes and predicts government failure, but our news and litigation divisions find people to tell the world how government-backed coercion and overreach have harmed them.
- Electing the party that campaigns on free markets does not automatically produce free-market governance. Electing that party without changing its incentives will disappoint us. That's why we don't shy away from naming names of political leaders who support



legislation at odds with their free-market rhetoric.

- Lawmakers typically do not lead social change, even when passing landmark laws. Rather, lawmakers ratify what the public has already indicated it will demand or at least accept. This is the Overton Window in a nutshell.
- Economics is not best understood as a precise science of dollars and cents. Predicting the economic results of a law or program is at least as difficult as predicting anything else involving human behavior. That's another reason not to have much faith in central planning.
- The bulk of good governance consists largely in doing nothing. In government, modesty is a cardinal virtue.
- Optimism is essential in the battle to save the republic. Temper it with reason; temper it with realism. But pessimism is demotivating — and self-fulfilling.
- You will never get everything you want in our political system, and that can be OK. Not every loss is a disaster, and no single win ushers in nirvana. "There is a great deal of ruin in a nation," Adam Smith wrote in 1777.
- The ground of liberty is to be gained by inches.
- Without the ability to go on offense, the best you will do is lose more slowly.
- Opportunities are perishable.
- It is crisis that produces real change, whether or not the crisis is real.

- There are no permanent victories; there are no permanent losses.
- There never has been a golden age of liberty, and there never will be. Policies of the past may have been better, but not because they're in the past. The future might be better, but only if we make it better.
- Things that are bound to happen will eventually happen, even if it takes a long time. That's why it's worth focusing on problems that are important, even when they are not urgent. We should never stop warning of the dangers of problems like runaway public debt, for instance, or any policy that just kicks the can down the road for someone else to deal with.
- The states are powerful engines of change in Washington. Not only do they exert political influence, but the U.S. Constitution gives them special legal heft. Change doesn't begin in Washington; it ends there.
- America is amazingly full of generous, civic-minded, principled, hard-working people committed to the basic ideas of this country's founding. I knew they were there; I just didn't know how many and how passionate they were.

People wiser than I am taught me most of these lessons. I figured out a few on my own. All of us at the Mackinac Center are better equipped to advance sound policy than we were 30 years ago. ■



*Joe*

**By Joseph G. Lehman**

*President of the Mackinac Center*





# GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY: IT SHOULDN'T TAKE A LAWSUIT

Michigan taxpayers deserve to know how their money is being spent, especially when that money is doled out to private companies. But some state entities, including the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, still resist providing public records to taxpayers.

In a recent lawsuit, the Mackinac Center and our client, Michigan Rising Action, successfully fought

attempts by the MEDC to delay releasing records about its dealings with a Michigan subsidiary of a Chinese company.

Michigan Rising was investigating American Lidar Inc., a corporation whose parent company, the Hesai Group, had been declared a threat to national security by the U.S. government. Michigan Rising wanted to understand any connection between American



# “This routine Freedom of Information Act request should have been met with prompt compliance.”

Lidar and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, so it requested e-mails, correspondence, and other records from the MEDC. This routine Freedom of Information Act request should have been met with prompt compliance. Unfortunately, it took a lawsuit to force the agency to produce records that belong to the public.

Michigan Rising sent an initial request to the MEDC on May 29, 2024. The agency acknowledged the request, estimating it would take 16 hours and \$593.48 to fulfill. Michigan Rising mailed a check. As the weeks passed, Michigan Rising repeatedly attempted to contact the MEDC for an update. Over six weeks later, the MEDC finally responded. Its response was lackluster. The agency simply said that it was working on the request and couldn't say when it would be finished. Frustrated with the unreasonable delay, Michigan Rising came to the Mackinac Center for help.

These delays were no surprise. The Michigan Economic Development Corporation has long resisted attempts to shine a light on its incentive programs.

Michigan's Freedom of Information Act does not require government bodies to produce records on a

fixed timeline. Instead, they may issue nonbinding, good-faith estimates of the time it will take to complete a request. But that discretion is not unlimited. A public body's estimated time frame must be met by diligent work to fulfill the request. The Mackinac Center's lawsuit argued that the MEDC's estimate and slow response violated this basic standard.

The lawsuit was quickly dismissed after the MEDC produced hundreds of pages of unredacted records in a little over a week. We are pleased with the result, but it should not take a lawsuit to obtain public records. We hope that this lawsuit will encourage public bodies such as the MEDC to take their responsibilities to be transparent more seriously and to produce records in a reasonable time frame. ■



**By Stephen Delie**

*Director of Transparency  
and Open Government*



# MICHIGAN CAN DO MORE FOR SOCIAL MOBILITY,

## Mackinac Center, Archbridge Institute find

Social mobility does not get much attention from free-market think tanks, and it should. That's why the Mackinac Center and the Archbridge Institute jointly published a report on social mobility in Michigan.

What is social mobility? It's the right to use your God-given talents to pursue a meaningful life for yourself and family. Thomas Jefferson called it "the pursuit of happiness." It is something we often take for granted in the Land of the Free, but it is increasingly under threat from the seemingly endless list of rules, mandates and dictates issued by local, state and federal governments.

The Archbridge Institute created a state ranking of social mobility in 2023. It compared states based on their regulations, taxes, business dynamism, legal systems, education, skill development, community involvement and charitable activities, among other things. The five highest-ranking states were Utah, Minnesota, Montana, Delaware and Vermont.

Anyone who ranks states based on complex policies risks exaggerating minor differences. But Archbridge's "Social Mobility Index in the 50 States" is reliably constructed. Its rankings are tightly correlated with poverty rates: The more social mobility in a state, the less poverty it has. This is what basic economic theory would predict.

Michigan ranked 30th — not bad, but showing room for improvement. The state has fairly reasonable regulations for land use, and it scored well on overall regulatory restrictions. It also posted a high ranking on measures concerning the rule of law and predatory state behavior, such as civil asset forfeiture and government fines and fees.

The state ranked poorly on corporate tax policies and property tax rates. Michigan's neighbors bested us on these measures, except Illinois. Also troubling was the state's ranking in business dynamism. Michigan



# BY THE NUMBERS



**By Michael Van Beek**  
*Director of Research*



**By Justin Callais**  
*Research Fellow, Archbridge Institute*

# 30<sup>th</sup>

How Michigan ranked in the overall index

# 52%

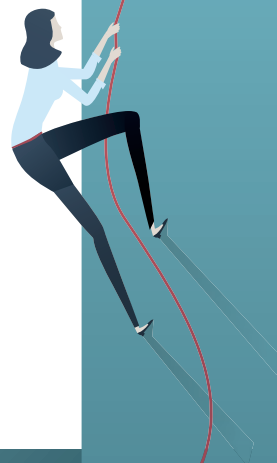
Percentage of Michigan residents who reported giving a donation of \$25 or more in the last year

# 4.81/10

Michigan's Social Mobility Index score

is home to fewer business startups than other states. Policymakers should reform state laws and regulations to make it easier to start and build a business here.

The Archbridge Institute's new Social Mobility Index provides a new lens to assess how well states are helping foster the "pursuit of happiness." Michigan has a long way to go, but thanks to this report, we have a clear blueprint for making progress. ■





# How Free Are We?

## Where Michigan Ranks on the Freedom Scale

The mission of the Mackinac Center for Public Policy is to advocate for freedom. We promote policies that let Michigan residents lead lives uninhibited by harmful or arbitrary government regulations.

The Mackinac Center's most recent Issues & Ideas forum at the Freedom Embassy in Lansing brought together like-minded individuals to learn more about how Michigan's policies measure up against those of other states.

"How Free Are We? Where Michigan Ranks on the Freedom Scale" featured William Ruger and Jason

Sorens from the American Institute for Economic Research. The two presented findings from their latest edition of "Freedom in the 50 States," published by the Cato Institute.

Ruger and Sorens' index features more than 230 policy variables that influence freedom across states. The research distinguishes between economic freedom and personal freedom, analyzing policies that add to or subtract from individual liberty.



**Michigan placed seventh in the country on the freedom index**



Jason Sorens

In economic freedom — which includes fiscal and regulatory subcategories — Michigan took 10th place. In personal freedom — which includes 12 subcategories ranging from incarceration and arrests to campaign finance — Michigan landed at 19th. Michigan's lowest ranking is in educational freedom, 48th in the nation.

The findings suggest that freedom is positively associated with economic growth and population growth through in-migration. States compete for residents and businesses, which can enhance liberty



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

**Rodney M. Lockwood Jr.**

Chairman

Chairman, Lockwood Companies

**Joseph G. Lehman**

President

President, Mackinac Center for Public Policy

**Jim Barrett**

Vice Chairman

Retired President & CEO, Michigan Chamber of Commerce

**Joseph P. Maguire**

Treasurer

President, Wolverine Development Corporation

**Richard D. McLellan**

Secretary

Attorney, McLellan Law Offices

**Daniel J. Graf**

Chief Investment Officer, Amerisure Mutual Holdings, Inc.

**Richard G. Haworth**

Chairman Emeritus, Haworth, Inc.

**J.C. Huizenga**

Chairman and Founder, National Heritage Academies

**Edward C. Levy Jr.**

Executive Chairman, Edw. C. Levy Co.

**Jennifer Panning**

President of Artisan Tile, Inc.

**Hon. Clifford W. Taylor**

Retired Chief Justice, Michigan Supreme Court



*William Ruger*



and quality of life. Ruger and Sorens emphasized that states with higher freedom levels tend to attract more people, supporting economic vitality.

Michigan continues to struggle with high rates of emigration. Policies that cut spending on higher-than-average budget areas, Sorens and Ruger argued, can create a more attractive environment for residents and businesses alike, promoting growth and stability. ■



**By Jessica Wyeth**

*Marketing Analyst*

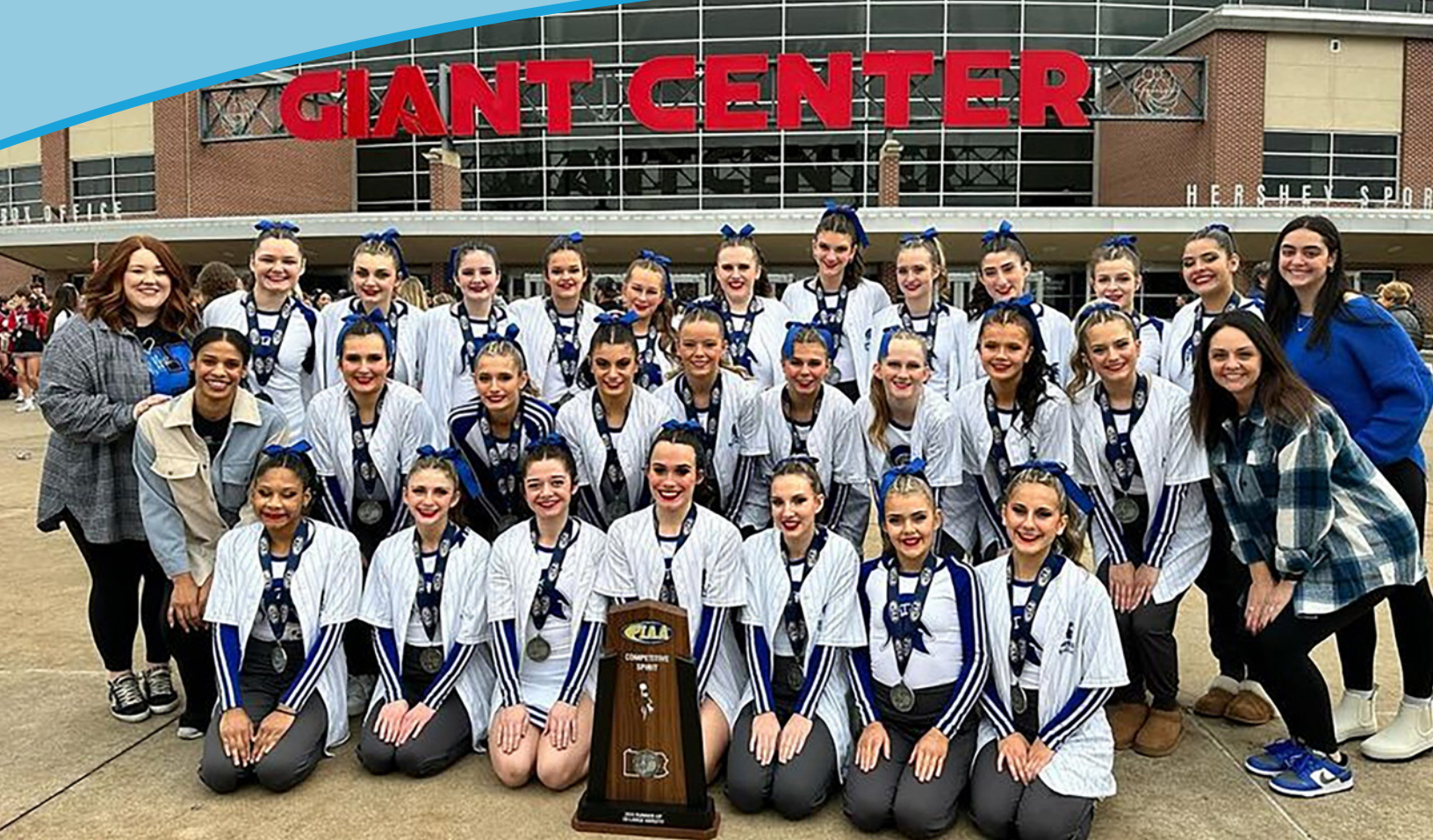
# LEADING IN CHEER AND CHARITY



Alanna Wilson is a competitive high school cheerleading coach and a program officer for Stand Together Trust, a philanthropy that supports social entrepreneurs. Coaching is about more than just telling athletes what to do, she says. You have to listen to them, encourage them and develop a way forward together. That coaching philosophy has helped her cheer team win its district competition four times and its state competition twice. Last year, it won the national event for the first time.

Alanna applies this approach to her role with Stand Together Trust. An early-career internship with Sen. Bob Casey convinced her she could make a difference in policy. She went on to do that as an aide in the Pennsylvania Legislature before moving to the Knee Regulatory Research Center, focusing on licensing laws that create barriers to employment. In her leadership position at the Knee Center, Alanna learned about Stand Together Trust and its vision for a society where





every person can realize his or her potential. She joined the team as a state program officer in 2023 and now serves as the Mackinac Center’s primary point of contact.

She’s constantly communicating with other cheer coaches and does the same with grant recipients. “They share their problems, I connect them with other organizations doing great work, and we create sustainable solutions together,” Alanna says. Stand Together Trust helps thousands of partner organizations apply a “bottom-up approach to policy change, empowering people to bridge divides and tackle our country’s biggest challenges in the economy, education, health care and communities.”

Alanna finds creating sustainable change rewarding. “I love giving someone the confidence and guidance needed to be the checks and balances of their own life,” she says. At the same time, it’s challenging to work

with partners in 50 different states because every state is unique and grant resources are finite. “That’s when strong coalitions come in. All of us are truly in this together.”

Stand Together Trust has supported the Center since 2005. “The Mackinac Center has positioned itself as a leader in so many ways,” Alanna says. “I’m really excited to see what big moves in labor policy we can accomplish together and what other policy areas we can lift up to that same level.” ■



**By Jennifer Majorana**  
*Senior Director of Advancement*



# A TALE OF TWO STATES: What Michigan Can Learn from Florida's EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS



In September, the Mackinac Center partnered with a homeschooling community in northern Michigan to provide families a unique opportunity to learn about civics. More than 100 students and parents joined Mackinac Center staff in Traverse City for a fun day of hands-on learning.

Students of all ages participated in interactive sessions to learn from policy experts about the branches of government, the voting process and the role of legislators in passing bills. I led a session with parents who wanted to learn about Michigan's education landscape and state policies that impact the homeschooling experience.

Some parents mentioned the challenge of finding the right curriculum. Many states have responded to this challenge by creating Education Savings Accounts –

publicly funded, government-authorized accounts that students can use for a variety of expenses. In Florida, for example, parents with school-age children can apply for the Family Empowerment Scholarship ESA to cover the cost of curriculum materials, home education, tutoring, therapies, tuition, online courses and other educational services.

Erin Ray, who attended the parent session, is a permanent resident of Florida who participates in that state's ESA program. She spends a portion of the year in Michigan, but relies on the Florida ESA to purchase textbooks, musical instruments and other curriculum materials. She's also able to secure tutoring services for her daughter who has dyslexia – an expense that would be too costly otherwise.





Photos by MCPP

Erin and her husband use ESA funds to customize their children’s education. “It’s the freedom to raise your kids to be well-educated, well-rounded, good citizens,” she said of homeschooling. “It’s the freedom and flexibility to prioritize your family first.”

In Michigan, however, most public funds can only be used for public school districts, including charter schools. Unlike in Florida, Michigan taxpayers receive no reimbursement when they choose alternative means of educating their kids.

That’s because a discriminatory amendment in the state’s constitution prohibits the use of public funds for nonpublic education. Unfortunately, the U.S. Supreme

Court recently declined to hear the Mackinac Center’s case that sought to strike down the amendment and open the door to programs like ESAs in Michigan.

The Mackinac Center works to ensure parents have access to a variety of educational options. We will continue to fight for Michigan’s families to get the same opportunities as those elsewhere. ■



**By Molly Macek**  
*Director of Education Policy*





# WANT MICHIGAN TO BECOME A GROWTH STATE ONCE AGAIN?

# WE HAVE A BLUEPRINT FOR THAT

Photo by MCPB

For most of the 20th century, Michigan was a growth state. We were at or near the top of all the states in jobs, income and population growth. Detroit was for a time the wealthiest city in America.

But for most of the past 60 years, Michigan has fallen behind on most state rankings. Aside from some spurts in the 1990s and 2010s, we have lagged our neighbors and the rest of the country on most measurements of economic well-being.

And in recent years, most states saw stronger growth. Michigan is near the bottom when it comes to jobs, income and population growth since the COVID-19 lockdowns.


Many people blame the weather. It's an easy excuse, but we've always had cold winters, and Idaho, which also has cold winters, is a growth leader in the United States. Warmer weather helps, but beautiful and temperate California has been shedding population.








# *So why has Michigan fallen behind?*


There are many reasons, but the main reason is poor public policy. Natural resources, including favorable weather, help. But the state needs a better policy environment: a limited government that keeps spending and debt under control. Economic freedom that allows competition among businesses and entrepreneurs without favoritism. Regulations that focus on protecting the public while being constantly evaluated for their negative effects.


 **Energy and electricity:** “Energy policy should be neutral about generation sources. The state should repeal mandates and special subsidies and tax provisions for all forms of energy. Producers should compete on an open, level playing field. Michigan needs a reliable grid, powered by steady energy sources. Citizens and businesses need a competitive system where they can freely choose their own electricity providers.”

 **Education:** “Michigan needs to eliminate its discriminatory Blaine Amendment. If our courts will not throw out this outdated, bigoted law, voters must repeal it with a constitutional amendment. This would open the door to choice in education for Michigan families. Twenty-two states have expanded school choice since the pandemic, but not Michigan. The money should follow the student whether the student attends a public, private, charter or trade school, and it should be available for homeschooling and tutoring, too.”

 **Taxes:** “Michigan must eliminate corporate welfare, use the money to cut the income tax in half, and slowly phase it out altogether. The highest-growth states have no personal income tax. Michigan should work toward that standard.”

 **Housing:** “Michigan needs to speed up the rate of processing permits at the state and local level. We should eliminate many licensing requirements for builders and workers, not add new mandates. And lawmakers need to pursue statewide zoning reform. Restrictive zoning laws have caused skyrocketing builders’ costs and often eliminated building opportunities entirely. State officials should prevent zoning rules that have nothing to do with public safety, like minimum home sizes, mandatory parking spots, setback limits and aesthetic requirements.”

 **Labor:** “Michigan and the country need labor laws that give workers choice and require unions to compete. This means a repeal of the 1931 Davis-Bacon Act and prevailing wage laws. These laws eliminate competition and mandate union wages regardless of market demand. Right-to-work laws, which give private sector workers the choice to support a union, should become the norm. States should adopt opt-in policies for all government employees, including teachers, state workers, police and firefighters. They should know that they have a constitutional right not to pay a union so they can make informed decisions.”

 **Spending and Debt:** “Michigan’s budget should not increase faster than population and inflation. Extra revenue should go toward paying down our \$50 billion in debt owed to the state’s retirees or be used to phase out the income tax.”



**“Policymakers have been busy handing out favors to some businesses and industries, hiking income taxes, radically increasing spending and establishing quasi-monopolies.”**



For decades, and especially in recent years, Michigan’s focus has been on short-term fixes and flashy projects that garner press releases but generate little economic development. Policymakers have been busy handing out favors to some businesses and industries, hiking income taxes, radically increasing spending and establishing quasi-monopolies. Growth states, by contrast, have been flattening the tax code, streamlining regulations and rapidly building housing.

With your help, we will shift the Overton Window of political possibilities away from Big Labor, Big Business and Big Government and toward the people who want to work, earn, live and pursue happiness in Michigan. ■



**By Jarrett Skorup**

*Vice President for Marketing and Communications*



You can see “Michigan’s Blueprint for a Brighter Future” at [www.mackinac.org/Blueprint](http://www.mackinac.org/Blueprint).





# CONGRESS, STATES, COULD GET NEW OPPORTUNITY TO REVISIT LABOR LAW

Legal challenges to the National Labor Relations Board could bring big changes in labor law and freedom for workers.

Companies such as Amazon, Trader Joe's and SpaceX have filed lawsuits that allege the board is unconstitutional. They have prevailed in many cases, which are now before federal appeals courts. Favorable rulings by the appeals courts could present an opportunity for the most meaningful reform to labor law since the 1940s.

Private sector labor law is almost exclusively governed by the National Labor Relations Act. The National Labor Relations Board administers the law, and states have little ability to regulate private sector workers through their own laws.

The president does not have the authority to remove members of the NLRB at will, which its challengers say makes the agency unconstitutional. Under the U.S. Constitution, the chief executive — the president — may rely on lower officials to execute the law. Absent special circumstances, the president can freely remove them for any reason.

An exception to this rule allows multimember, expert agencies to be exempt from the president's removal power, barring special circumstances. But the NLRB

is not an expert body, the Mackinac Center recently argued in an amicus brief to the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals. It conducts no scientific or economic research and is an expert only with respect to its own rules. That is not the type of expertise that exempts an administrative agency from the president's removal power.

If the courts rule that the National Labor Relations Board is unconstitutional, it would mean a sea change in labor policy. Lawmakers would once again be forced to examine the nation's premier labor law, opening the door for meaningful pro-worker change. Should federal lawmakers be unable to come to an agreement, it would be up to the states to regulate the private sector, which makes it possible for states to adopt pro-worker reforms that were previously unavailable.

We will continue to monitor the progress of these cases, and we look forward to sharing our expertise in labor policy with the courts. Stay tuned! ■



**By Stephen Delie**

*Director of Labor Policy*

# INVESTIGATION REVEALS DISSATISFACTION WITH UNION TOWNSHIP LAND REQUIREMENTS

Michigan Capitol Confidential ran two investigative stories in October looking into reports that government interference is stifling the real estate market in Union Township in Isabella County.

CapCon spent months traveling to Union Township, walking property lines and talking to more than 20 residents about their frustrations with the local officials.

Many interviews stayed off the record, with residents saying they feared retaliation.

Developers, business owners and residents often struggle to sell land in the Mid-Michigan township housing over 11,000 people. Three brothers tried to divide and sell land. But the township blocked the sale unless the brothers extended a road and added a cul-de-sac costing about \$100,000, all for land valued

at \$60,000. The would-be buyer told us officials also demanded a new water line be installed.

Planning commissioner Doug Labelle resigned in frustration.

“There are numerous people leaving the township for other areas that are more amenable,” Labelle wrote in a 2023 email to Township Manager Mark Stuhldreher. “[They] are going elsewhere due to these ongoing difficulties.”

A 2018 lawsuit filed by Lux Family Properties argued that the township had “required and assessed taxes disguised as sewer connection fees and water benefit fees totaling \$18,625.”

According to the lawsuit, Lux paid the bill in protest because it knew the township could use “withholding



Photo by Adobe Stock





Photo by MCPP

“There are numerous people leaving the township for other areas that are more amenable.”

of building permits as a mechanism to require Plaintiff’s payment of the disputed fees.”

CapCon has just scratched the surface. After we published two stories on the township, at least five more sources reached out with evidence that the local government strangles development at the cost of its residents.

While other news outlets spoon-feed press releases from government officials, CapCon drives the miles, interviews the sources, and gets to the bottom of

stories that matter to local residents. We’ll have more to say about Union Township in the coming months.

If you know of a local government overreaching and you have evidence, tell CapCon. ■



**By Scott McClallen**  
*Michigan Capitol Confidential Reporter*





**MACKINAC  
STAFF  
PROFILE**



Photo by MCPP



# Helping Preserve Freedom Through Giving and Collaboration

A history of family service led in time to Julie Ferguson coming to the Mackinac Center:

“My father was a U.S. Army colonel, and patriotism was a big focus in my family,” Julie says. “It was really central to my upbringing.”

Due to her family’s many Army-related moves, Julie went to various grade schools and high schools before heading to the University of Georgia on a music scholarship. She played the double bass, which now sits in her living room, largely unused. “After some time in college, I decided that I contributed to the arts better as an audience member and a patron than a musician,” she says with a laugh.

Julie switched her major to English, thinking she might work as a teacher or librarian. But for the first decade of her career, she worked in business-to-business sales.

Eventually, she had a daughter and wanted to work part-time. She became a campaign manager for the local United Way, which led to many years in the world of nonprofit service. She worked for the United Way, the Boys and Girls Club, and a foundation that helps burn victims, as well as a food bank.

“I loved the work of being on the ground, helping people who really do need the help,” Julie says. “But I also began to see that many groups in the nonprofit world are reliant on and entangled with the government and bureaucracy.”

Julie saw up close how hard the government and many of its regulations made it for people to advance. A long-time conservative and believer in free markets, she looked for a job with a group trying to do something about it.

Enter the Mackinac Center.

“It was important to me to see that the Mackinac Center neither seeks nor accepts government funding, and I was highly impressed by the quality of the work the team delivers,” Julie says. “It was also fascinating to meet the group and people responsible for the concept of the ‘Overton Window,’ which I had heard about listening to Rush Limbaugh years earlier. It really explains how public policy works.”

As senior director of strategic partnerships, Julie helps those who love liberty preserve our freedoms for the next generation through giving and collaboration.

In her free time, Julie loves to swim for fun and fitness. She also takes in the arts and culture in cities around the Southeast with her daughter, an art student. ■



**By Jarrett Skorup**

*Vice President for Marketing and Communications*



# Election Changes Lansing Dynamic for 2025

For the last two years, Michigan has operated under the first Democratic trifecta — one-party control of the governor’s office and both chambers of the Legislature — since 1984.

That dynamic will change in January, as Republicans flipped enough seats in the November election to give them a 58-52 majority in the Michigan House for the next two-year term.

Despite having the narrowest possible legislative majorities, the Democratic trifecta pushed through an aggressive, progressive policy agenda that undid many of the fiscally responsible, pro-growth reforms of the 2010s. Republican control of the House should, at a minimum, block further erosion.

The only legislation that must be passed every year is a budget that funds state government

operations. This could be the House Republicans’ greatest opportunity for leverage, as Gov. Gretchen Whitmer cannot spend any money that the Legislature doesn’t appropriate. It may be easier for lawmakers to find cover to cut spending given that Democratic leaders burned through the state’s cash balance during their two years in power.

Programs added during the last two years without Republican input should be set to the side, and continued funding of them should be contingent on funding roads and other priorities.

Another leverage point for the incoming House majority will be the oversight process. Each chamber has an oversight committee with broad authority to review state agency operations and to subpoena both documents and officials. A well-structured oversight committee with a strong chairman and diligent



# 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.



**Scan the code to sign up for our email list.**

members can expose problems and inappropriate behavior. Incoming House Speaker Matt Hall is a former House Oversight Committee chairman and abundantly aware of the power the committee possesses.

Beyond that, look for much of what passes the Legislature to be more locally oriented and nonpartisan. Meaningful movement on high-profile issues will require dealmaking that makes sense to members of both parties. They will need to work a muscle that hasn't gotten much use during the last five years, and that will take both time and trust. ■



## **By David Guenther**

*Vice President for  
Government Affairs*

**IMPACT** is published six times a year by the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, a nonprofit, nonpartisan, tax-exempt research and educational institute classified under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code.

140 West Main Street, P.O. Box 568  
Midland, Michigan 48640 | 989-631-0900  
Mackinac.org | mcpp@mackinac.org

### **Project Manager**

Holly Wetzel

### **Editors**

John LaPlante  
Tim Cavanaugh

### **Designers**

Mick McArt  
Hannah Golab







# NO UNION NECESSARY:

## Mackinac Center *Exposes the Truth* Behind Homecare Unionization Scheme

Michigan is once again allowing unions to siphon money meant for homecare providers. New laws that will take effect next year reinstate the dues skim by classifying homecare providers as public employees and allowing them to be unionized. Under this practice, some of the state's most vulnerable workers — most of whom care for family members — will be pressured into union membership.

Many may join because they believe a union is able to help increase their pay and provide benefits, as the United Auto Workers aims to do in contract negotiations with Ford or General Motors. But this is not true. The union has no negotiating power. The Legislature sets the funding and pay rates, and no union can collectively bargain with the Legislature.

Patrick Wright, vice president for legal affairs, highlighted this point and others during his testimony before the Michigan House Appropriations Committee. "These two bills would take necessary resources from our most vulnerable citizens and their family member providers and divert a windfall to the SEIU, for the union to use as it sees fit, including spending on partisan politics," Wright noted.

While the door to this exploitative practice has been reopened, the Mackinac Center is forcefully challenging the union's narrative. At the committee meeting, one Democratic lawmaker questioned Wright about pay and benefits. Wright pointed out that if the Legislature felt that homecare workers are underpaid or wanted to add benefits, it could change that right now, no union necessary.

The state and national coverage on this issue has turned what might have been a quiet policy change into a public debate. The Mackinac Center has been interviewed and quoted in multiple articles, including a Wall Street Journal editorial that highlighted the egregiousness of the new laws.

Unlike the last time the dues skim was in place, public employees now have a constitutional right to opt out of union membership. But unions will have an easier time recruiting, as the new laws require all caregivers to attend a mandatory training where unions will have 30 minutes to distribute information and materials. Lawmakers struck down an amendment that would have made caregivers aware of their First Amendment right to opt out.

The Mackinac Center has stepped up to inform these individuals of their rights and will continue to do so in the coming months. By arming homecare workers with this critical information, the Mackinac Center is working to equip Michigan's most vulnerable with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions about union membership. ■



**By Holly Wetzel**

*Director of Public Relations*

# People Behind the Cause

We cherish freedom of association at the Mackinac Center, and we depend on it. When you support us with money, time or advice, you choose to associate with people who share your ideals. We're grateful, and we know that you expect results. It's why this publication is called "IMPACT."

Freedom of association and relationships go hand-in-hand. Success depends on engaging with legislators, the media, the public and especially you. We foster deep connections with donors and partners who work to increase freedom in our state and country.

Most philanthropists support several causes. Sometimes, they ask me how to evaluate where to give. I encourage all donors to get to know the people behind the cause. The closer you get to the people you might support, the more

effectively you can evaluate their integrity. You'll also get to know potential weaknesses. Understanding what is — or isn't — possible is key to making a fully informed decision about your giving.

Getting to know us at the Mackinac Center has an added benefit. Many innovative ideas begin from conversations with you. Through our events, surveys and one-on-one visits, you help us sharpen our thinking. We want to hear your thoughts and experiences because they shape our approach and enhance our effectiveness. The values and goals that unite us sometimes lead to personal friendships, too.

Thank you for your unwavering support and belief in the work we do together. Your relationship with us — your free association — fuels the fight for policies that enhance freedom and prosperity in Michigan and beyond. ■



**By Jim Walker**

*Vice President for  
Advancement*