

IMPACT



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“Efforts to reform forfeiture laws have brought together disparate groups from opposite sides of the political spectrum, including the left-leaning American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan and the free-market Mackinac Center for Public Policy.”

— From a Detroit News article written by Jonathan Oosting and Beth LeBlanc, on new developments in reforming forfeiture laws in Michigan.

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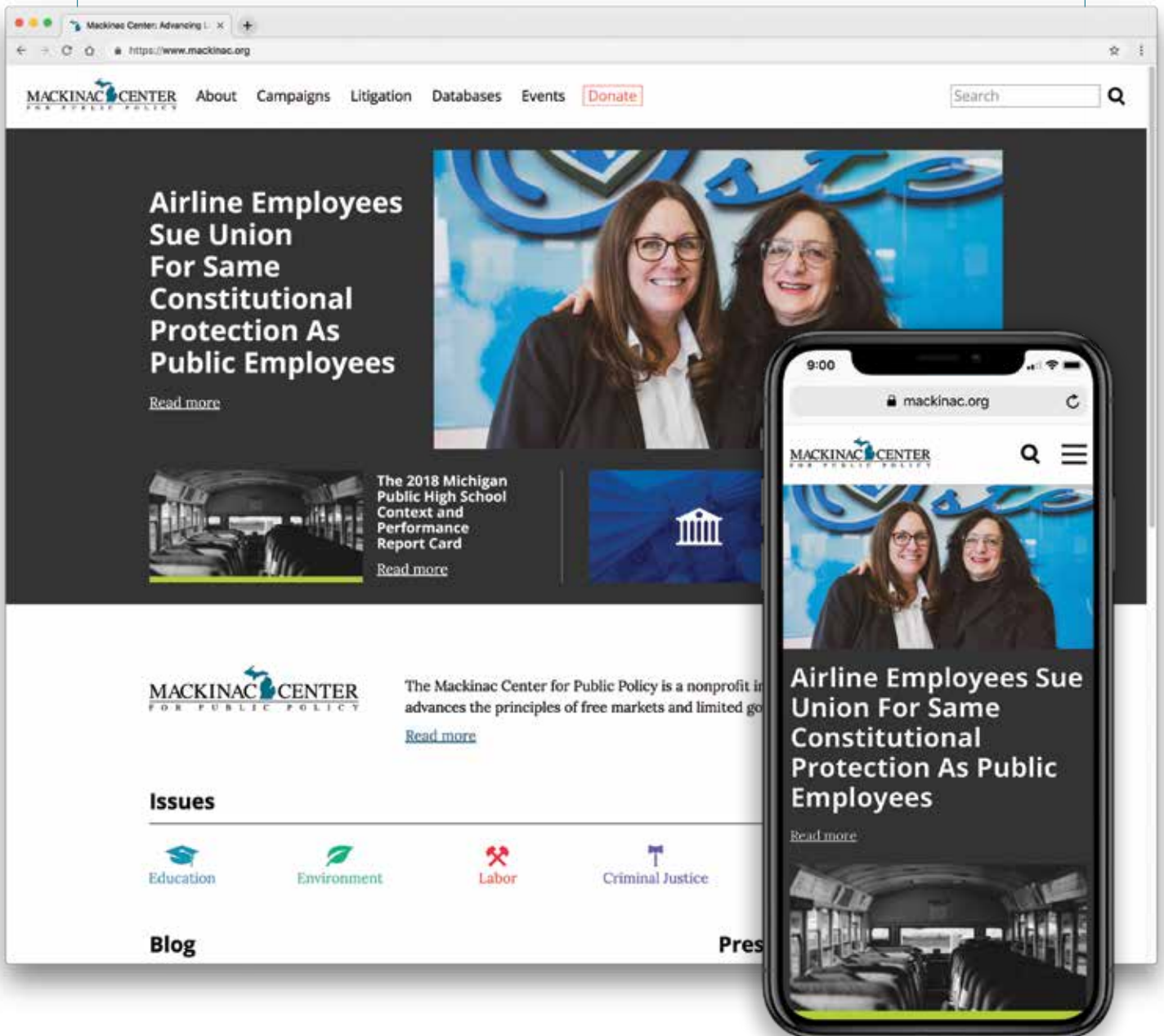
Monthly Giving a Win-Win

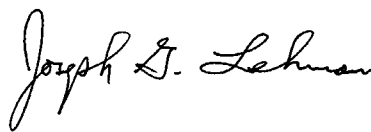


Our website has been completely overhauled! The homepage has a new, easy-to-use layout, navigation has been streamlined, and text size has been increased throughout the site to make everything easier to read. The website has also been optimized for mobile devices so you can enjoy the same great experience on the road.

Check it out and let us know what you think!

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Welcome, Gov. Whitmer

November's elections signaled the abrupt end of eight years of unified Republican control of Michigan government. Democrats replaced Republicans in all four of the highest statewide constitutional offices. Republicans held the House and Senate but lost seats in both. Michigan's Supreme Court, which was already moving away from conservative jurisprudence, became more liberal after the elections. Now that Democrat Gov. Gretchen Whitmer succeeds the GOP's Rick Snyder, how will the Mackinac Center advance free-market ideas in the new political environment?

We'll start by continuing practices that have proved effective. We'll stay on offense for transformational free-market ideas like lower taxes and spending, educational excellence through choice and flexibility, sensible regulation, and labor freedom.

We'll remain nonpartisan, working with anyone, regardless of party, who agrees with our policy recommendations. Even with Republicans in total control, we found it beneficial at times to partner with liberal lawmakers and organizations. We joined with the ACLU, for example, to work toward curtailing civil asset forfeiture, where law enforcement agencies seize property during a criminal investigation but then retain it for financial gain.

We will model civility. We leave the mudslinging, name-calling, innuendo, and character attacks to those who seem to enjoy those things.

We're ready to add new capabilities as well, including a more muscular government affairs presence in Lansing. David Guenther, our new senior strategist for state affairs, will lead this crucial capacity to ensure effective educational outreach to lawmakers and strong relationships with them.

Over barbecue, I asked David, "What distinguishes the Mackinac Center's

government affairs operation?" We jotted down the following traits that make us different from lobbyists who swarm the Capitol to represent political organizations, trade associations, interest groups and single-issue concerns.

The Mackinac Center will:

- Be predictable advocates for free-market public policies.
- Present only information that is accurate and measured.
- Speak out only where and when we have research and expertise.
- Always articulate the ideal policy, but don't impede progress toward the ideal when political compromise falls short of perfection.
- Conduct ourselves with professional courtesy.
- Demonstrate that our policy ideas produce superior outcomes that foster a healthy society, respect for the people, and human flourishing.
- Be respectful but never obsequious.

I'm sad to report that these seven practices are just about all that's necessary to stand out in a very good way. But I'm happy to report that none of these are new to us, so we won't find it difficult to harness the power of these traits to advance free-market policies.

Gov. Snyder left Michigan in better shape than it was when he assumed office. But still, billions of tax dollars are misspent and government harasses and even harms the people through poor policy.

Gov. Whitmer, and everyone else in Lansing, can count on the Mackinac Center to energetically advocate for the policies we believe have proved to help people the most and to live by the principles outlined here. ■

JOSEPH G. LEHMAN

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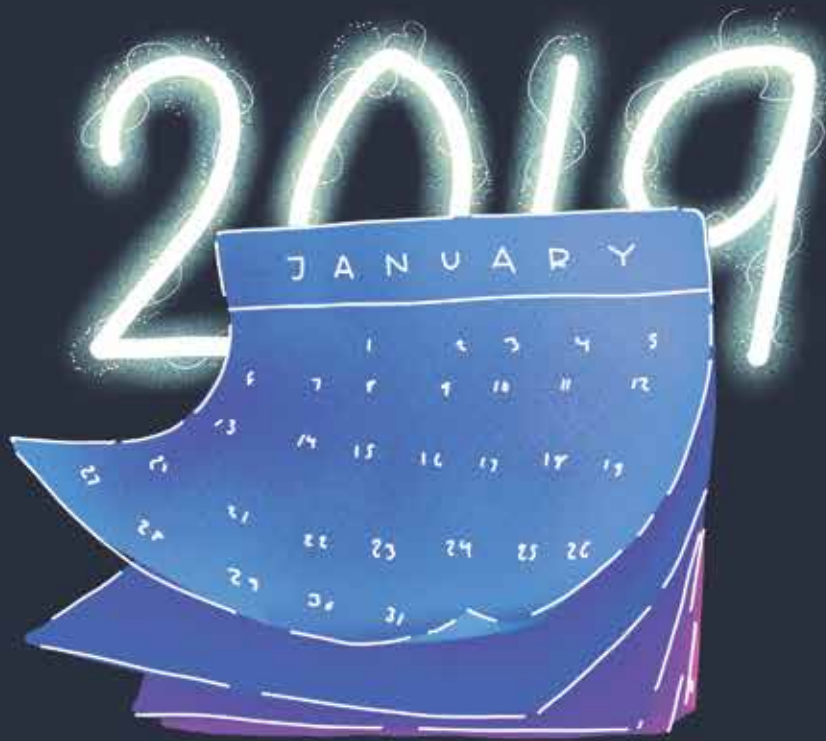
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Year in Preview: Criminal Justice

2019 ushers in a highly anticipated change in the state political environment. The election of a Democratic governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general and secretary of state alongside a majority-Republican Legislature will divide the branches of government for the first time in nearly a decade. Happily, however, there is one issue where consensus should be easy to reach: Michigan's continuing need for smart criminal justice reform.

The state made several great strides on this issue under Republican leadership, drawing national attention and developing a new reputation as an innovative leader in corrections and re-entry. Now, Republicans may be tempted to halt that progress to prevent a Democratic governor from receiving credit for successfully implementing additional reforms — but they should resist. As some of Michigan's most prominent business leaders have repeatedly argued and demonstrated by example, our state's families, workforce and neighborhoods stand to make real gains when we reform our courts, police

and corrections policies. In this area, more than many others, policy changes can save and redeem lives.

**KAHRYN
RILEY**

Empowering judges to get to the root causes of crime by using specialty drug, sobriety and mental health courts helps stop the cycle of offending and re-offending, for instance. Providing prisoners opportunities to get diplomas, degrees and vocational certifications closes the talent gap. Getting more police officers out of patrol cars and onto foot patrols helps them gain the trust of the communities they serve and resolve cases more quickly. All of these advances and more have been made possible in the last few years by a wealth of reliable data and the willingness to act on it with anyone who wants to help. It would be tragic to let politics get in the way now.

For our part, the Mackinac Center will continue taking a balanced, data-driven perspective on the policy choices that will make us freer, safer and more prosperous. We will continue identifying areas where

the poor are disproportionately burdened by processes meant to serve all people equally. We will continue to condemn government overreach. We will continue to call for more transparency about how money flows in the justice system and for better accountability for our court and corrections officials, so they will rule justly and rehabilitate effectively.

In the couple of years that the criminal justice department has been active, we've struck on an effective model to expand the Overton Window, and you'll see it in action again in the new year. Look for novel, peer-reviewed research, another roster of Issues & Ideas Forums on pressing topics within the criminal justice field, and a steady supply of commentary, op-eds, media interviews and coalition-building. Our robust, influential network of partners has become one of the hallmarks of this initiative, and we hope it serves as a model for all Michiganders to reach across the aisle and do the work of making our state a better place. ■

Kahryn Riley is the director of criminal justice reform at the Mackinac Center.



Susan Marshall (left) and Linda Rizzo-Rupon (right) are two of the plaintiffs represented by the Mackinac Center Legal Foundation.



MACKINAC CENTER LEGAL FOUNDATION

The Mackinac Center Legal Foundation fights for the rights and freedoms of individuals in Michigan and around the country so that workers can freely and happily prosper. As part of this effort, it is currently working on two important cases, both of which are outlined on the next two pages.

Extending Janus Protections

In the wake of the great victory for worker freedom provided by the Supreme Court's recent Janus decision, the Mackinac Center Legal Foundation filed a lawsuit on Jan. 8, 2019, in a federal district court in New Jersey. The case, *Rizzo-Rupon v. International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers*, is on behalf of three United Airline ticket agents:

MORGAN SHIELDS

Linda Rizzo-Rupon, Susan Marshall and Noemio Oliveira. The collective bargaining agreement between their union — IAM District 141 — and United Airlines requires all workers to pay the union. Employees are free to join the union, but those who do not must render “a monthly sum equivalent to the standard monthly dues required of the Union members.” This sum, which the agreement calls a service fee, can cost an employee over \$700 a year. The three workers are asking the court to find that they have a constitutional right to not be forced to pay unions as a requirement of employment.

Janus held that states and public sector unions violate the First Amendment Rights of public employees when they extract service fees without their consent. Before states and public sector unions deduct agency fees from nonmember's wages, employees must first affirmatively consent to the deduction. By filing this suit on behalf of the three airline workers, the Foundation is asking for the

courts to extend the logic of Janus to the Railway Labor Act.

Far too often, workers, like Rizzo-Rupon, are bullied by unions. She says that when she started asking the union about her rights, it started bullying her into signing up and becoming a member. Rizzo-Rupon feels that she has the necessary skills — as a good employee — to protect her own job. Why should she be forced to pay a fee to the union?

There are approximately 500,000 airline workers and over 200,000 railway employees in the United States, many of whom are likely covered by a collective bargaining agreement and forced to pay agency fees to unions. Applying Janus to the Railway Labor Act would extend worker freedom to a significant number of people across the country and give them what they deserve — the right to have a say over their pay. ■

Morgan Shields is the director of Workers for Opportunity at the Mackinac Center.



Terence Gaudlip (left) and Michael Thulen (right)

Securing the Right to Leave a Union

On Oct. 3, 2018, the Mackinac Center Legal Foundation filed suit on behalf of three Lakewood, New Jersey, city employees who seek the right to end their financial obligation to a public sector union at any time. Michael Thulen, Michael Porter, and Terence Gaudlip sued AFSCME and various New Jersey state officials so as to overturn a provision in a law the union's allies in New Jersey passed to limit the impact of the Supreme Court's *Janus v. AFSCME* decision.

In that case, the Supreme Court held that public sector employees did not have to provide financial support to unions that the employees were not members of. Nationally, there are 5 million public sector employees directly affected by this decision, which could eventually cost public sector unions over \$600 million annually.

PATRICK WRIGHT

Anticipating this ruling, legislative allies of New Jersey's unions wasted no time trying to protect union finances by enacting the Workplace Democracy Enhancement Act on May 18, 2018. In part, this law limits to 10 days a year the time when public employees could end financial support to a union. It is meant to make it harder for current union members to become nonmembers and therefore clearly be protected by the *Janus* decision.

This case arose, in part, due to the Mackinac Center's campaign, *My Pay My Say*, and its work in New Jersey. Having learned many lessons in union tactics when Michigan went right-to-work in late 2012, the Mackinac Center has sought to assist other states in informing their public sector workers of their rights under *Janus* and protecting those same rights in court


where necessary. One major ally has been Americans for Prosperity-New Jersey. Together, we have sought to aid the over-300,000 public sector workers affected by *Janus* in the Garden State.

Thulen is a former union leader for his local, and when this case was filed, he said "As someone who has personally committed my time and energy to stewarding my local union, I fully believe that unions can play a positive role in the workplace. We are simply asking that our labor leaders spend more time serving their members in that capacity rather than erecting arbitrary barriers meant to hold us hostage."

The case was assigned to the federal district court in Camden, New Jersey. ■


Patrick Wright is the vice president for legal affairs at the Mackinac Center.

New Policymakers Mean More Scrutiny of Recent Policy Changes



During the campaign, incoming Gov. Gretchen Whitmer pledged to fix the roads in the state. She also pushed back on some of the major reforms of the past few years. She wants people to be fired if their workplace is unionized and they choose not to contribute to the union. In other words, to repeal right-to-work. She wants to increase the costs of government construction projects. In other words, to reinstate the prevailing wage laws. But these are good reforms that help the people in the state and deserve to remain. The Mackinac Center made a strong effort to educate lawmakers about the benefits of both reforms. But they will only remain if people want them to be around, so we'll get a chance to see how popular they are.

JAMES HOHMAN



Both laws ensure that unions are voluntary institutions. Right-to-work allows people to opt out of an organization that they don't want to support. Prevailing wage requirements weight the bidding for government construction projects to union vendors, which prevents public servants from giving the public the best deal.

Right-to-work changes how unions treat their members. If unions can take their members' financial support for granted, they are less likely to act in their members' best interest. The fact that unions could have taken members' financial support for granted may have explained why they have tended to be ideological and partisan in ways that their members are not. A change to unions' incentives encourages them to represent their members and to work with employers for mutual gain. This can have economic impacts on the whole state and help right-to-work states have faster growth in population, income and employment.

Regarding prevailing wages, the public benefits most when government contracts go to the best vendor with the best price.

Deciding on the right vendor can get complicated, but politics complicates it even more. Politicians don't just want buildings to be built, they want other social ends to be served in their construction. They may want only environmentally friendly buildings to be built, for instance. Prevailing wage policies are like that. They require union-scale wages for individuals who work on government construction projects: We don't want to build buildings, we want to build buildings with union labor. This is good for union construction workers and bad for taxpayers.

So prevailing wage laws transfer wealth from the public to those working on government construction projects. The public doesn't get anything in return for that generosity. It's a bold transfer of wealth and getting rid of it will stretch taxpayer dollars further. The savings will become more obvious as the economy expands and state and local governments construct more things.

Laws, such as ones on union membership or the prevailing wage, can concentrate benefits to some groups at the public's expense. This happens all around the country. One of the Mackinac Center's important functions is to help lawmakers get rid of these kind of laws. And we do this by fostering a climate of public opinion that makes it unpopular to provide private benefits at public expense.

So when new policymakers are elected, we get a test of popular sentiment. New public officials have likes and dislikes that differ from those of the people they replace. Yet they are still elected representatives of the state's residents and are ultimately subject to what they want. Policy changes only last as long as they are popular. We're going to see how good of a job we've done. ■

James Hohman is the director of fiscal policy at the Mackinac Center.





State Enacts Report Card Requirement for Schools

Thanks to recent action from Lansing, public schools in Michigan finally are about to receive the same sort of report cards as their students.

While far from a panacea for the state's educational ills, the passage of House Bill 5526 is a hope-filled victory worth celebrating. Assigning schools letter grades based on performance is a popular, commonsense idea that benefits parents who have a tremendous amount invested in those results.

Serious legislative efforts to bring school letter grades to Michigan extend back at least five years, well before the high-pressure partisan turmoil of December's lame-duck session. But the pressure of the ticking clock at the end of the year helped the bill's outgoing champions — Gov. Rick Snyder and Rep. Tim Kelly, R-Saginaw Township — get it across the finish line.

In adopting HB 5526, Michigan joins 15 other states that use letter grades to measure public school performance. Unlike the other states, though, it will not assign schools an overall grade. Instead, schools will get five separate grades, each based on how many students meet academic standards, improve in their tested knowledge, and achieve compared

to peers of similar economic backgrounds, among other things.

**BEN
DEGROW**

Up to now, Michigan has used an assortment of tools to report school performance, including hard-to-decipher designations and color-coded scorecards. The interest groups that dominate education debates at the Capitol have been served by a murky accountability system that confuses more than clarifies. They're also better organized than parents who want an easily understood measuring tool.

A March 2018 poll commissioned by the Michigan Association of Public School Academies, representing the state's charter schools, found statewide voter support for an A-F school grading system dwarfed opposition by 69 to 22 percent. Nearly 50 percent strongly agreed with the idea.

Their instincts are justified. An easier-to-grasp system of letter grades brings more parents into the conversation about how to improve schools. It also provides useful information for parents who choose a school other than the one assigned to them based on their address. Fifteen percent of 1,500 Michigan charter school parents recently surveyed by the Mackinac Center said they had difficulty finding useful information about school quality.

Even though the state's assessments certainly cannot provide a complete picture of school quality, many parents still know they tell something valuable. That's especially true of lower-income and minority parents. Most surveyed said that standardized test scores played an extremely important role in helping them decide where to enroll their child.

It's hard to say how much school letter grades will drive large-scale improvements. Research from Florida and New York City found that the fear of earning an F grade led schools to make real classroom changes that brought about measurable improvements.

We can only wait to see if similar improvements play out in Michigan. But giving parents more and better tools to help them decide their children's path to educational success? That deserves our applause, right now.

Champions of educational freedom and excellence should count this legislation as a small but undeniable triumph. ■

Ben DeGrow is the director of education policy at the Mackinac Center.

The Lame Duck is Cooked. How Does it Taste?

Michigan’s recently concluded lame-duck session was consequential both in the number of bills the Legislature passed (more than 400) and the number of those bills Gov. Rick Snyder vetoed (60). Here is a quick rundown on some of the key issues where the Mackinac Center provided its expertise:



Voter-Initiated Legislation

The Legislature and governor approved essential revisions to the unworkable and economically damaging legislation on paid sick leave and the state minimum wage.



A-F Accountability

Gov. Rick Snyder signed legislation to require the Michigan Department of Education to issue every school in the state an A-F grade on five criteria related to student academic performance.



Environmental Regulation

A bill to prohibit state environmental regulations stricter than those imposed by the federal government was signed into law.



Nonprofit Supporter Protections

A bill that would have prohibited state and local governments from compelling 501(c) nonprofit organizations to produce lists of donors or members passed both chambers but was vetoed by Gov. Snyder for specious reasons.



Labor Reform

A bill that would have required public sector unions to conduct regular recertification elections passed out of committee but was not brought to the Senate floor for a vote. Several term-limited senators who had heretofore been reliable supporters of labor reform were uninterested in additional measures to empower Michigan public sector workers.



Licensure Reform

The Mackinac Center’s licensure reform package, which passed the House 106-1 in October, was gutted in a Senate committee by a term-limited senator at the behest of several Lansing trade associations. It later died without receiving a vote on the Senate floor. We will redouble our efforts on this package in 2019.



Legislature Intervention

Gov. Snyder also vetoed a bill that would have guaranteed the Legislature’s standing to intervene in any lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of a Michigan law. The veto came back to bite him almost immediately, as one of his successor’s first acts as governor was to request an attorney general’s opinion on the constitutionality of the Line 5 tunnel legislation Gov. Snyder championed. Both our new governor and attorney general campaigned on shutting down that pipeline.

While we are all frustrated that more of these priorities did not become law in 2018, the valuable lessons we learned will influence our legislative engagement and strategy going forward. ■

A MACKINAC CENTER REPORT

PATRICK WRIGHT

FROM PROHIBITED TO PERMITTED

| A Legal History of Corporate
Handouts in Michigan



This study is available online at mackinac.org/s2018-12.

A Chronicle of Cronyism

New study tracks Michigan's long-standing prohibition against corporate handouts

Politicians today freely give away massive subsidies to select companies if they promise to relocate or create new jobs in their state or city. Whether it's the \$4 billion Michigan officials supposedly offered Amazon to locate its second headquarters here or the \$4 billion Wisconsin pledged to Foxconn, these stories are commonplace today. This is why most people probably don't know that for much of Michigan's history, corporate handouts like these were strictly unconstitutional.

"From Prohibited to Permitted: A Legal History of Corporate Handouts in Michigan" is a new study by the Mackinac Center's Patrick Wright, vice president for legal affairs, that chronicles Michigan's early history with taxpayer-funded economic development. A key actor in this story is one of Michigan's finest Supreme Court chief justices, Thomas Cooley. In a landmark Supreme Court case in 1870, Justice Cooley laid out the rationale for why taxpayers' money should not be spent for private purposes,

even if that spending produces tangential benefits for the public.

Justice Cooley wrote in that opinion: "Every honest employment is honorable, it is beneficial to the public; it deserves encouragement.... But it is not the business of the State to make discriminations in favor of one class against another, or in favor of one employment against another. The State can have no favorites. Its business is to protect the industry of all, and to give all the benefit of equal laws."

This legal precedent established by Justice Cooley was repeatedly challenged in the courts for decades. Lawmakers kept trying to fund special interest groups, but the Michigan Supreme Court again and again used the Cooley precedent to deny corporate handouts to the likes of railroad companies, sugar manufacturers, corn farmers and streetcar companies.

In addition, Michigan voters repeatedly reaffirmed this constitutional prohibition by rejecting multiple attempts to amend the state constitution to allow corporate

handouts. Wright also shows that even the authors of the state's current constitution meant to prohibit them.

In 1941, the Michigan Supreme Court threw out Justice Cooley's precedent and approved subsidies for apple growers. Surprisingly, the court's opinion rested merely on the argument that subsidizing apples would have a positive spinoff effect; it failed to address the principal objection to this use of taxpayer dollars that Justice Cooley had articulated.

Based on the findings of this new study, Wright argues that the courts should take another look at the constitutionality of taxpayer-funded economic development programs. There does not appear to be a strong legal case for why this spending should be legal now, given that it was prohibited for much of Michigan's history. ■



Media Roundup for 2018



Holly Wetzel
Communications Coordinator

In 2018, the Mackinac Center reached more audiences than ever before. Our research and expertise was quoted in over a hundred different news outlets and our policy experts had a direct voice through op-eds, which appeared in many outlets across the nation and throughout Michigan.

Every victory, big or small, is important to our mission. But perhaps the most influential of last year was the U.S. Supreme Court decision known as *Janus v. AFSCME*. Not only was our amicus brief cited in the decision, but we also gained nationwide media attention through our expertise in labor issues and our new nationwide campaign, *My Pay My Say*.

In the wake of the decision, the country's top newspapers turned to the Mackinac Center for commentary, including *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post* and *Politico*. Joseph Lehman, president of the Mackinac Center, and John LaPlante, senior fellow at the Center, co-authored an op-ed for *USA Today*, which was redistributed to newspapers across the country, including the *Detroit Free Press*.

In addition to the nationwide attention on labor, all of our other policy areas were featured in a variety of outlets. Throughout the year, our research on prevailing wage, licensing, wage laws, bail reform and more

was mentioned in multiple editorials by *The Detroit News*.

Jason Hayes, our director of environmental policy, wrote in *The Wall Street Journal* about who's really setting Michigan's energy policy. Radio listeners across Michigan got to learn more about changes needed in criminal justice, thanks to Kahryn Riley, our director of criminal justice reform. People could also read about these reforms in newspapers across the state.

Education freedom in Michigan had a voice, thanks to Ben DeGrow, our director of education policy. Outside of the usual Michigan outlets, DeGrow spread the message of educational choice by being quoted in several education outlets, including *Chalkbeat*. Our fiscal policy staff remained a consistent source of information on issues such as taxes and corporate welfare. *Bloomberg*, *Crain's Detroit Business* and *The Guardian* all featured our fiscal policy staff's research in their 2018 publications.

Our experts were also featured weekly in one of the *Beltway's* most well-read newspapers. Each week, we tackled a different topic from a free-market perspective and wrote about it in an op-ed for *The Hill*.

As we begin 2019, we look forward to all the new ways we can share our work. ■



Supporting the Freedom Movement is Nothing Short of Heroic

**JOSEPH
MILLIGAN**

The year was 1776, and against a backdrop where the freedom of the American colonists was consistently infringed upon, a group of men had just signed the most profound document ever to acknowledge the God-given liberty that humanity should enjoy as our birthright — the American Declaration of Independence. The concluding sentence of this document states that the signers “mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.” These words were chosen carefully, and though the Founding Fathers pledged all three, I contend that a person who sacrifices even just one of these in defense of freedom is nothing short of a hero.

Fast forward to 2019, and we are surrounded by constant reminders that the battle for freedom is a living struggle that must be relentlessly and actively fought. Our taxpayer-funded universities are increasingly telling students that they cannot fully exercise their freedom of speech. Parents are constantly being told that only the state is capable of correctly educating their children for a productive life. And then there are renewed calls to repeal Michigan’s right-to-work law, which protects us from forced unionization as a condition of employment. We need heroes of liberty today as much as ever.

Some of us are blessed to use our professional careers to advance freedom. But we all have a role to play and it is a battle we all fight together; none of us, individuals or institutions, can win it alone. Your financial gifts, dear reader, are a heroic act. Thank you for making 2018 the year that the Mackinac Center was the best equipped we’ve ever been to be your voice defending, and indeed advancing, liberty. In 2019 let us keep alive and continually renew the pledge that was made between heroic men centuries ago — and is still relevant today. ■

Joseph Milligan is a regional director of strategic partnerships at the Mackinac Center.

A MACKINAC CENTER REPORT

JASON HAYES

CONFLICT TO COOPERATION

Collaborative Management of Federal Lands in Michigan

MACKINAC CENTER
FOR PUBLIC POLICY

This study is available online at mackinac.org/s2018-07.

Listen to the People

Public lands policy must take the views of residents into account

Public land managers will be more likely to implement balanced and effective policies when they recognize and respect the views of people living and working in the areas affected by their policy prescriptions. The result is good for both humans and public lands: The health and well-being of the public lands is improved, and people who use the land enjoy better lives and receive a stronger economic benefit.

In “Conflict to Collaboration: Collaborative Management of Federal Lands in Michigan,” the Mackinac Center’s Environmental Policy Initiative discussed the value of using a mix of scientific and local historical, social and economic factors to help set up public lands policies. The report describes examples, from Michigan and across the nation, of command-and-control management causing unrest and resistance in communities that have been directly harmed by public land managers’ decisions. It also describes how communities more rapidly accept the plans of managers who recognize their concerns and value their input. The Camp Cooks Integrated Resource Management Project, which is setting land management policies in the Hiawatha National Forest, in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, provides an excellent example of this situation.

Nahma Township is a community in the south-central portion of the UP. The area was initially settled in the mid-1800s as a logging community, and its people have a tie to the land surrounding their homes

JASON
HAYES

that long predates the 1931 formation of the Hiawatha National Forest, which surrounds the township. But changes in government policies and timber markets slowed demand for forest products from the area, causing the town’s lumber mill to close in 1951. That closure forced the town to switch its focus to outdoor recreation on public lands as a key income source. The township’s fortunes depend on access to the lands, through services provided to visitors who come to enjoy the natural beauty of the region.

For that reason, a draft version of the Camp Cooks Integrated Resource Management Plan, released by the U.S. Forest Service in August 2016, was of particular interest to the citizens of Nahma Township. In September of that year, Forest Service staffers held a public meeting and presented the plan. The agency proposed closing most of the roads and trails used by residents and visitors for off-road vehicles, claiming they damaged wetlands, streams and rivers.

Residents believed the Forest Service had released a completed plan and was holding the public meeting to force them to accept the road and trail closures. Given the heavy impacts the closures would have had on the area’s outdoor recreation-based economy, public response at the meeting was strongly negative. But throughout that meeting, embattled Forest Service officials protested that they were honestly seeking input, saying that no final decisions had been made.

In response, local businesses and residents took the Forest Service up on its claim and formed the Camp Cooks Task Force to guide the development of the draft plan. The task force took part in further public meetings and submitted comments recommending that the Forest Service reconsider the closure of key access roads. Because of its input, Forest Service officials agreed to remove the most actively used trails from the list of recommended closures.

In this instance, citizens and federal officials were able to work together to, in the words of local media, “detail a viable plan to create a restricted multi-use designated trail on and along the Nahma Grade, the former railroad long since abandoned and offered as part of the Michigan Rails-to-Trails Program.”

The Camp Cooks Task Force demonstrates that rural residents — the people most heavily affected by changes in land management policies — understand the importance of intelligent mixed-use management. For that reason, government managers have a duty to seek their input. When they do, their plans do a far better job of meeting the needs of those local people and improving the overall management of public lands. ■

Jason Hayes is the director of environmental policy at the Mackinac Center.

Legislative Briefing Introduces New Legislators to Mackinac Center

One key lesson I brought to Michigan with me following my 11 1/2 years running government affairs at the Texas Public Policy Foundation, or TPPF, was how vital it is to establish relationships and credibility with new legislators early on.

Over four election cycles, nearly two-thirds of the House

Republican Caucus went through our pre-election policy briefing programs. The philosophy and research we were able to provide lawmakers in these meetings

**DAVID
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Office Building. They met our experts and received some of our recommendations for how they should address our state's major challenges.

Beyond discussing policy, we had the exceedingly rare privilege of beginning our day with a conversation featuring

Senate Majority Leader-elect Mike Shirkey and Speaker-elect Lee Chatfield. Neither is often found in Lansing on a nonsession day — Sen. Shirkey told the audience he could

oversight. The Goldwater Institute's Naomi Lopez Bauman and the Buckeye Institute's Rea Hederman provided solutions to challenges in health care access and cost. Recovery Park CEO Gary Wozniak related his experience as a citizen returning to society from the criminal justice system and his ideas for improving prisoner re-entry. And NFIB-Michigan director Charles Owens helped the new legislators understand the essential changes that the outgoing Legislature had made to the



completely redirected the legislative conversation toward a liberty direction on occupational licensure, criminal justice, environmental policy, property tax reform and other key issues.

While I did not arrive in Michigan in time to institute such a program before the 2018 elections, the Mackinac Center hosted our first Legislator Policy Briefing in Lansing on Friday, Dec. 7. Sixteen members of the 100th Michigan Legislature — senators and representatives, returning legislators and newcomers, Republicans and Democrats — spent the day with us in the Binsfeld Senate

count on two hands the number of Fridays he's come to Lansing during his eight years in the Legislature. We were, then, honored to hear from him and Rep. Chatfield on balancing home life with legislative service, and district needs with Lansing demands, and how new legislators can ensure their time in Lansing is successful.

The Mackinac Center augmented its team of local experts with allies from across the country. Former TPPF executive director Arlene Wohlgenuth flew up from Palm Springs, California, to share her advice on responsible budgeting and effective agency

initiated legislation on paid sick leave and the minimum wage.

There are a lot of demands on legislators' time during the lame-duck session, and on new legislators transitioning to Lansing. But the enthusiastic reception from all of our inaugural participants gives me confidence that this program will become a must-attend event for more new legislators in the years to come. ■

David Guenthner is the senior strategist for state affairs at the Mackinac Center.

Mackinac Center Opens Lansing Office

The Mackinac Center for Public Policy, which has long offered sound ideas for local and state policy questions, is excited to announce the opening of our new satellite office in Lansing. The Center now has a place to hang our hats in the state's capital city, where we have been informing the work of people in the Legislature and governors' administrations, and partnering with other nonpartisan organizations to advance liberty-based policy for over 30 years. In this new year, our policy experts and government affairs team will have an established space to collaborate with others, enabling the Mackinac Center to better serve the research and informational needs of lawmakers and the Lansing community.

**LINDSAY
KILLEN**

The office officially opened its doors on Jan. 9 and henceforth welcomes all incoming lawmakers and members of the administration, as well as members of the Capitol media, for discussions about the Mackinac Center's policy priorities in 2019.

Located at 120 N. Washington Square, Suite 700, (ZIP 48933), the office will also house visiting staff and scholars and provide space for meetings and small events, just steps away from the Capitol.

"As we continue to expand the conversations about economic freedom and the reduction of bureaucratic red tape that limits individual liberty, there is an increasing need for a more regular presence in our state capital — both for addressing timely questions about changing policy, but also

for continuing to support the needs of the larger community. The Center has long been a resource for sound policy solutions for all people and we will continue to advance that mission across the state, including here in Lansing," said David Guenther, senior strategist for state affairs.

Indeed, the Mackinac Center believes there's no better time to open our doors in Lansing than in 2019. We believe it can be a banner year for a number of critical policy reforms that eliminate government red tape, expand government transparency, remove arbitrary barriers for those looking for work, and reestablish sensible justice within our criminal justice system. We are confident that these can be bipartisan efforts, as both sides of the political spectrum can embrace a common pursuit of greater economic mobility, opportunity and prosperity for people across our state.

"The Mackinac Center has been a beacon of free enterprise in Michigan since its inception over 30 years ago. These principles will continue to take precedence over the politics of the time. Central to our work is the Center's commitment to increase our capacities for reaching our state's most vulnerable, empowering them to engage in efforts that expand freedom and opportunity for all," said Joseph Lehman, president of the Mackinac Center. "This additional space in Lansing will help us continue to champion freedom for all Michigan residents." ■

Lindsay Killen is the vice president for strategic outreach and communications at the Mackinac Center.

BY THE NUMBERS POLICY VICTORIES

651,500

Number of people covered by union collective bargaining agreements in Michigan, who now can exercise their right to opt out of their union

\$5.1 billion

Spending on construction by Michigan's state and local governments

51 percent

Proportion of new legislators serving in Lansing, who may have different ideas about right-to-work and prevailing wage laws than the people they replace

Monthly Giving a Win-Win

Monthly donors are an important and growing part of the Mackinac Center family of supporters, more than doubling in number over the past three years.

This trend reflects the win-win nature of monthly giving. For supporters, setting up an automatic monthly gift can be a convenient way to manage one's charitable giving. For the Mackinac Center, monthly giving is a valuable aid in fiscal planning.

Here is how the Center's monthly giving program works:

You can enroll in the program at any time by visiting our Donate page at www.mackinac.org/donate.

After filling out a brief form and providing your credit card information, you simply indicate the amount you would like to give each month and click "Monthly." You will receive confirmation of your gift immediately by email. If you prefer, you also can set up a monthly gift by phone. Simply call us at **989-631-0900** and ask to speak to a member of the Advancement department.

After you enroll, the Center will charge your credit card in each successive month for the amount you indicated when you signed up.

There are many benefits to you in choosing to set up a monthly donation:

- Monthly gifts may be easier to fit into your budget and help you plan the year.

- You only have to set it up one time — we'll handle the rest.
- Because it's done safely and securely online, there is less paperwork.
- We will send you monthly or annual receipts for tax purposes — whichever you prefer.
- You receive regular updates, through our publications and mailings, on how your gifts are being used.

You also have the satisfaction of knowing that your monthly gift can make a tremendous difference in the fight for sound public policy. A monthly gift of \$10 adds up to \$120 annually to help inject free-market ideas into public policy debates. Your monthly gift of \$25 equals \$300 annually to fuel policy research and education. A monthly gift of \$50 provides \$600 annually to help protect our freedoms in court and be a voice in the media.

If you already are a monthly donor to the Mackinac Center, please accept our sincere thanks.

If you have questions about setting up a monthly gift, please call the Advancement department today at **989-631-0900**. We will be happy to work with you to set up the monthly donation that best meets your needs. ■