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MichCapCon.com

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Mackinac.org/databases



"Mackinac Center's CAP Report Card has not only honored our school as the best in the state of Michigan but also motivated us to continue providing the best education possible for our students."

— *Oguzhan Yildiz, superintendent of the Mackinac Center's 2018 CAP report card top school, Michigan Math and Science Academy.*



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My Smartwatch Inadvertently Humbled Me

DETROIT
**CHILDREN'S
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TechTown Detroit
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Detroit, MI 48202

On Saturday, May 4, the Mackinac Center for Public Policy and TechTown Detroit will host up to 40 young entrepreneurs at TechTown Detroit, in Detroit, Michigan. This event is open to the public, so please come on over and have a look. Don't forget to bring some cash!

Visit DetroitChildrensBusinessFair.com



On Civility

In January I spoke at the Flint Area Public Affairs Forum on the topic of “civility in the social media age.” The other panelists included a University of Michigan-Flint professor, a social media expert and a Democratic lawmaker.

MICHAEL J. REITZ

Here at the Mackinac Center, we think carefully about modeling civility. We’ve had to, as we think about the critics who have spat upon us, protested outside our office, sued us and lobbed death threats.

Civility is defined by researchers at CivilPolitics.org as the ability to disagree productively with others, respecting their sincerity and decency.

Civility is not conflict avoidance, a lack of disagreement or taking the moderate view. It is not using government to silence “the other.” Rather, it is a thoughtful inquiry into another person’s conclusions. It is the presumption of goodwill in spite of a disagreement.

Impertinent questions come to mind: Do we truly want civility? Does it matter as long your view prevails?

I answer “yes” for several reasons:

Innovation is spurred by divergent thinking. We will best solve the state’s challenges by engaging a wide range of ideas. Civility allows for respectful, creative engagement.

A conversation imbued with civility is more productive because it is more persuasive. Think about the last time someone pounded the table and loudly questioned your intelligence. Did that convince you to change your mind? Hardly. As advocates, we grow our numbers through persuasion, not taunts.

Civility increases “social capital” — the necessary grease in the gears of the Republic. Alexis de Tocqueville’s “Democracy in America” noted that for all the individualism of Americans, they

are constantly organizing associations and fraternities. Civil society, driven by the voluntary participation of individuals, operates best if respect is a valued trait.

Civility has a strong and necessary complement in free speech. It is fruitless to call for civility without also advocating for the right of all people to express themselves freely.

“So, what can any one person do?” asked my friends at the Flint event. I came with four ideas.

- Focus on what you can control: One person can influence his or her personal conduct far more immediately than structures or institutions. Twitter publishes 500 million tweets daily; one person may not be able to influence that deluge.
- To paraphrase a well-known saint, seek to understand, more than to be understood. Two books can inform the curious reader: “The Righteous Mind” by Jonathan Haidt and “The Three Languages of Politics” by Arnold Kling.
- Intentionally interact with people who hold different perspectives. It’s a fascinating exercise and aids your ability to persuade.
- Reduce the calamitous noise around policy and politics by reducing the stakes. Limit government to its core functions so it’s not in every area of our lives.

David French of National Review has asked: “Is there a single significant cultural, political, social, or religious trend that is pulling Americans together more than it is pushing us apart?” In this rancorous time, we would all benefit from finding areas of common ground. ■

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Medicaid Work Requirements' Tremendous Potential for Positive Impact on Spending and the Workforce

When Michigan policymakers decided to expand Medicaid under “Healthy Michigan” in 2013, the state predicted that a total of 475,000 able-bodied, working-age adults would be added to the beneficiary rolls. Today, that number has ballooned to more than 670,000. Coupled with the 2 million individuals on the traditional rolls, the program now covers more than 40 percent of all births across the state and the health care costs of one in four Michiganders. These trends are alarming, as are the associated burdens shouldered by taxpayers, but lawmakers have an opportunity to relieve the stress on this safety net and

**LINDSAY
KILLEN**

also provide the workers needed for Michigan’s rebounding job market.

Michigan spends approximately \$4,300 per adult enrolled in Medicaid, funded through over \$4 billion from state tax revenue — slightly over \$2 billion of which comes directly from taxpayers through the General Fund. The federal government picks up the tab for 71 percent of the state’s Medicaid costs and funds 95 percent of Healthy Michigan. But the federal funding for Healthy Michigan enrollees is scheduled to continue going down from the original 100 percent to 90 percent and possibly lower after 2020.

In 2018, then-Gov. Rick Snyder signed legislation permitting the state to ask the federal government for permission — under something called a Section 1115 waiver — to implement work and community engagement requirements for the able-bodied population on Medicaid. Just before Gov. Gretchen Whitmer took office in January, the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services approved the waiver, setting the stage for legislators and the new administration to get the requirements ready for 2020. When the waiver legislation was passed, House and Senate fiscal analysts estimated that these requirements could save state taxpayers \$25 million to \$45 million annually. While

this represents a good first step toward reigning in Healthy Michigan's out-of-control spending, the requirements' potential positive influence upon the state's workforce may prove to be even more important.

We can look at both federal and state experiences with similar changes to see how the new requirements could shift labor and spending dynamics in Michigan. Following President Bill Clinton's 1996 reform that imposed work requirements upon able-bodied adults on federal welfare, caseloads fell dramatically. They are now 56 percent lower than they were 20 years ago. As reported by a Heritage Foundation study on this reform, welfare dependency significantly decreased and the nation experienced a corresponding boom in employment, particularly for single mothers who had been on welfare. Approximately 50 percent of the never-married women returned to the workforce or entered it for the first time. Over 66 percent of single women who dropped out of high school found jobs and left the rolls. Most dramatically, nearly 100 percent of mothers ages 18-24 left welfare to find employment. Subsequently, over 1.6 million children were lifted out of poverty. The portion of black children who were living with a single mother on welfare declined from almost 42 percent to 30 percent in just six years following the landmark reforms.

Tennessee's experience in Medicaid reform in 2005 tells another powerful story. Facing unsustainable costs for the state's mounting Medicaid rolls, then-Gov. Phil Bredesen made the difficult political decision to kick 250,000 able-bodied adults off the program. Rather than languishing in an abyss of lost coverage, over 65 percent of these individuals entered the job market. Of those who found employment, over 90 percent received employer-sponsored health benefits for themselves and their families.



Michigan taxpayers and employers should be encouraged by the possibility that we can follow a similar trajectory that restores the dignity of work for thousands of people across our state. From 2010 to 2018, Michigan has added a half-million jobs with wages that are now higher than the national average when adjusted for cost-of-living. Yet, of those currently enrolled in the Medicaid program, nearly 34 percent — or approximately 228,000 — are working-age, childless, and able-bodied.

As Michigan policymakers prepare work and community engagement requirements this year, they do so at a time when our job market is strong and diversifying. And there are a number of ways one can satisfy these requirements — which mandate a minimum of 80 hours per month — and benefit our communities. They include:

- Working or actively seeking employment.
- Volunteering.
- Enrolling in school full- or part-time.

Whether Gov. Whitmer is committed to working with lawmakers and state agencies to administer these reasonable requirements is an open question. The Mackinac Center worked with lawmakers and coalition partners to advance these reforms under the Snyder administration last summer, and it also corresponded with staff at the federal departments of Labor, and Health and Human Services. We hope to continue this work with the new administration in Lansing. ■

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

CURRENT CASES



Michael Dorr bought a house in St. Clair Shores, fixed it up and began renting it out through services like Airbnb. City officials objected and fined him.

Read more at mackinac.org/Dorr.

Susan Marshall (left), Lin Rizzorupon (right) and Noemio Oliveira (not pictured) want the freedom to leave their union without losing their jobs.

Read more at mackinac.org/RLA.



Michael Porter, Michael Thulen Jr. and Terence Gaudlip are fighting for their right to cease financial support to a union they don't believe in.

Read more at mackinac.org/NewJersey.





Michigan Repeals Its Painters License

Did you know that before you can earn money as a painter in Michigan, you used to have to pay hundreds of dollars, sit through hours of classes and pass an exam? Recently, though, lawmakers voted to repeal the occupational licensure mandate for painters.

JARRETT SKORUP

This is good news. The law was ineffective and likely accomplished few, if any of the goals intended for it when it was passed in 1980.

Painting is not dangerous — people do it on their own homes every day. And even if it were, the requirement was rarely enforced; roughly one-tenth of painters in Michigan even have a license.

The law was arbitrary. Painters needed 60 hours of classes to work, or 10 times the number for auto mechanics. And the number was much more than it is for some other occupations that deal more directly with public health and safety,

such as babysitters, house cleaners, restaurant workers, private pilots and more. None of those require a state license (nor should they).

The painter license restricted people from working by putting obstacles in their place. The fees and hours were an unnecessary burden. And people wanting to work could be denied the ability to do so by the state's "good moral character" provision.

Repealing the mandate was a good step in eliminating a regulatory burden. It will create more jobs for workers and save consumers money by providing more competition. Lawmakers are considering some other major licensing reforms in 2019 as well.

The next step is setting up a review process for current licenses on the books, focusing on the number of jobs requiring a license and the scope of those regulations. Several other states have a regular review process,

and Michigan should as well. House Bill 6114 from last year has been reintroduced as Senate Bill 40 in 2019.

A key drag on the state's economy is the number of people with criminal backgrounds and not working. Nobody should be forced to hire someone with a record, but the state should make it easier for them to do so if they want. One way to do that is to remove "good moral character" provisions and allow ex-offenders to get an occupational license, provided their criminal offense is not directly related to the job they want to hold. House bills 6110-6113 passed the Michigan House last year but died in the Senate and should be reintroduced.

More information about the costs of occupational regulations can be found at www.mackinac.org/licensure. ■

Jarrett Skorup is the director of marketing and communications at the Mackinac Center.



was a strategic choice of a governor who wants to provide lawmakers the courtesy of a first, detailed look. It appears now that vital fiscal details were revealed in her first budget proposal, introduced in early March.

The New Governor's State of the State Address

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer delivered her first State of the State address on Feb. 12. Michael LaFaive, the Mackinac Center's senior director of fiscal policy, has watched the last 28 State of the State speeches as part of his official duties with the Center. He's also read others all the way back to Gov. William Milliken's 1969 address.

LaFaive, along with his colleagues, keeps a tally of proposed expansions and limitations offered up by governors during their terms in office. The tally gives insight into each governor's faith in state government to solve — or not solve — problems that beset Michigan and her citizens.

The tally for Gov. Whitmer's first State of the State speech was 6 proposed expansions and one proposed limitation. She proposed fewer expansions than all governors since Gov. Milliken, who proposed an average of 5.6 expansions per speech from 1969 through 1982. Gov. Jennifer Granholm proposed the most, with an average of 16.3.

Even comparing Gov. Whitmer's first State of the State to the first for all other governors demonstrates that her impulse for expansions is relatively modest. Gov. John Engler offered only three in his 1991 speech. Gov. James Blanchard offered only six in his first State of the State, back in 1983. Gov. Granholm proposed the most expansions of any first-year governor, at 13.

Remarkably, there has been one instance of a governor proposing no expansions of state government in a State of the State. That distinction belongs to William Milliken. His 1974 address requested no expansions and offered up a single limitation on state government.

Mackinac Center observers expected far more detail from Gov. Whitmer than she delivered. She campaigned both on fixing the roads and on education. After six weeks in office, she could have used the State of the State to lay out her administration's plans in detail on at least one of those subjects, but we learned very little. Perhaps that

The Mackinac Center's Morey Fiscal Policy Initiative may have gotten ahead of the governor when it comes to presenting ideas on the budget to the Legislature. On Jan. 1, LaFaive published "State Budget: Cut Corporate Welfare for Roads and Economic Growth." This report reminds officials that Michigan's corporate handout apparatus is ineffective and wasteful.

Any money saved from eliminating programs or personnel (at least \$261 million) could be redirected to roads as part of larger reforms. According to LaFaive, about \$57 million (in 2017) of this spending was not even appropriated by the Legislature. Instead, it flowed directly to the state's chief development agency from Indian gaming revenues, as it does every year.

Research by the Mackinac Center and other institutions and scholars has shown repeatedly that state handouts to corporations and industries are ineffective development tools. But studies also show a positive economic development impact from an efficient, quality road infrastructure. That is why lawmakers debating the governor's new budget request should look to move state spending from the Michigan Strategic Fund and its administrative alter ego to road funding. ■



By Joseph P. Maguire

Honorary Chairman, Legacy Society

As treasurer of the board of the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, I want to express my gratitude for your support. Your devotion to freedom and your vote of confidence in the Mackinac Center are greatly appreciated.

This year I hope you will join me as a member of the Mackinac Center Legacy Society and be part of preserving a strong voice for liberty in Michigan and our nation for years to come. You can do this by making a charitable gift to the Mackinac Center in your will or estate plan.

In the next 20 years, trillions of dollars in household wealth in our nation will be transferred to the next generation. Most of this will be handed down to children or other family members, but if just 5 percent were given to charity, it would have \$441 billion in impact.

As a father and grandfather, I do not want to shortchange the next generation of the opportunities I have enjoyed as an American. Yet that is what you and I risk without organizations like the Mackinac Center to defend liberty and hold government in check.

The Mackinac Center's research, education and legal efforts all serve to preserve our nation's founding principles of limited government, free markets and the rule of law.

When you join the Legacy Society, you help ensure that this work will continue in the years ahead — and you enjoy the peace of mind of knowing that your hard-earned assets will support the principles you live by.

You also will enjoy other benefits, including special seating at Mackinac Center events and recognition at our annual Legacy Society gathering.

If you have already named the Mackinac Center in your will or estate plan, thank you! You have our deepest gratitude.

If you are considering joining the Legacy Society, please know that there are many ways to make a gift, such as by naming the Mackinac Center in your

will or trust, adding the Center as a beneficiary of your life insurance policy or IRA, or establishing an endowment. Our team would be happy to discuss any of these options with you. Please feel free to call them at 989-631-0900 or send an email to legacysociety@mackinac.org.

Thank you again for your support. ■

Maguire is president & CEO of Wolverine Development Corporation, a third-generation family company investing in freestanding commercial properties throughout Michigan since 1924. He has been a member of the Mackinac Center Board of Directors since 2001 and honorary chair of the Legacy Society since 2014.

Revocable Living Trust: A roadmap for your estate plan

By Gregory T. Demers

Partner, Warner Norcross + Judd LLP



In today's charged political climate, more and more clients are asking about ways to support charitable causes such as those championed by the Mackinac Center, not only through lifetime giving, but also in their estate plan.

The most common technique to benefit charities in an estate plan is to include the charity as a beneficiary under a revocable living trust. Other less common, but often equally viable methods, include designating the charity as a beneficiary of a life insurance policy or retirement account.

For this article, however, I will focus on techniques I have used a number of times with clients to include the Mackinac Center as a beneficiary under their revocable living trust.

A revocable living trust serves as a roadmap for distributing your assets at your death. This trust names the person responsible for paying all debts and

expenses, and the persons and organizations to whom remaining assets are distributed. It is the instrument of choice to implement estate planning goals.

This trust is revocable (changeable) while you are alive and competent, and is an effective method to avoid having a probate court involved in your affairs after your death.

When a client asks me for specifics about including charities in an estate plan, our discussion typically focuses on the following.

Would the bequest be a percentage of the client's remaining assets after death or a fixed dollar amount? For ease of administration, my general recommendation to clients is to provide for a fixed dollar amount to pass to the charity.

Another topic we discuss is whether the client wants to give the charity's board of directors full discretion

on how to best use the bequest, or whether the client wants the bequest to support a specific interest within the organization's charter.

Endowment funds are another method of giving. These are a perpetual bequest, with only the income or earnings used by the charitable organization.

Just as there are a number of techniques available to make a gift during one's lifetime, supporters of the Mackinac Center have many options for including the Center in their estate plan. ■

Demers is a specialist in business and estate planning law and is the featured speaker at Mackinac Center Planning for Life Workshops. He also is a member of the Mackinac Center Legacy Society. If you would like to learn more about making a gift to the Center in your estate plan, please call 989-631-0900 and ask to speak to a member of the Advancement Department.

SAVE THE DATE!

Planning for Life WORKSHOPS

The Mackinac Center again will offer complimentary estate planning workshops for our members and their friends this year.

Whether you are just beginning to think about your will or estate plan, or need to update your current documents, you will leave our workshop energized and equipped to move forward. Join us in a comfortable, small-group setting with guest speaker Gregory T. Demers of Warner Norcross + Judd LLP to learn more about leaving a legacy that reflects your values.

All workshops are free of charge, and nothing is sold. You are welcome to include family members, friends or your personal adviser in your registration.

The 2019 workshops schedule is:

Wednesday, June 5
11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.
The Townsend Hotel
100 Townsend Street
Birmingham, MI 48009

Tuesday, August 6
11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Stafford's Weathervane Restaurant
106 Pine River Ln.
Charlevoix, MI 49720

Tuesday, September 10
11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.
(Venue to be announced)
Grand Rapids, MI

Luncheon is provided at all workshops.

Our supporters will receive invitations by mail for these events. If you would like to make sure you are on the invitation list, or would like to reserve your seat now, please call **Sandra Darland** at **989-698-1905** or **events@mackinac.org**.



After Years of Dedicated Effort, Forfeiture Reform is in Sight

Lawmakers' commitment to enacting this important property right protection is the fruit of a tireless, research-backed education campaign by Center's forfeiture expert, Jarrett Skorup

It is right and just to empower police to take away the proceeds and instruments of a crime. The drug house, the stolen car, the income from a fraudulent scheme — these should be taken from the individuals convicted of committing a crime. But imagine what might happen if police could also take ownership of property from someone without even charging that person with a crime. Now add financial pressure from strained budgets, and you have a recipe for a problem known as “policing for profit.” Fortunately, the Michigan Legislature has committed to protecting innocent property owners' rights, and our state may soon join the many others that have eliminated this moral hazard.

When police believe that some property may have had criminal origins or involvement, they have two options. They can seize it, which means they take temporary custody of the property. Or they can forfeit it, which means that they become its legal owners and are free to dispose of it as they wish. That might mean destroying contraband, depositing cash in department coffers, or selling the item and spending the proceeds on items that weren't in the budget.

It's crucial to understand the distinction between seizure and forfeiture. Police

should always have the ability to seize suspicious items, but the transfer of ownership ought to be delayed until the original owner is actually convicted of a crime involving those items.

This point of view has been championed by the Mackinac Center for years, and our ongoing education campaign has borne much good fruit. In 2015, lawmakers raised the standard of evidence that the state is required to show in order to take possession of private property, moving it from “preponderance of the evidence” to “clear and convincing evidence.” Additionally, they mandated reports on how much property law enforcement departments forfeit, where it came from and whether the owner of the forfeited property was charged with a crime.

A few months later, the state eliminated the requirement that citizens pay a cash bond in the amount of 10 percent of the property's value in order to get into court and contest its forfeiture.

Now, lawmakers are on the cusp of passing the most important reform of all: requiring a criminal conviction to be secured before a department can forfeit private property. This will implement a policy of criminal asset forfeiture, the legitimate practice of depriving the convicted of ill-gotten gains.

And it will eliminate the questionable practice of civil asset forfeiture, or policing for profit, which has allowed law enforcement to proceed without convictions or even charges.

Getting here took an ambitious public education campaign, led by the Center's Jarrett Skorup. It involved writing a study and scores of blog posts, commentaries and features in state, local and national media and hosting Issues & Ideas Forums to discuss the topic in Lansing. The campaign also told stories, through print and video, of innocent individuals harmed by this practice.

Michigan is now poised to join more than a dozen other states that have committed to protecting the property rights of innocent people targeted by the police. Passing forfeiture reform will mean a freer, safer and more prosperous Michigan, and we are proud to have been part of the effort to make it possible. ■

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

**KAHRYN
RILEY**



Law Enforcement Calls for Forfeiture Reform

In Michigan, people can lose ownership of their property through a process known as civil asset forfeiture. Police can take cash, cars or even a home, all without even having to file a criminal charge against the owner.

As former Michigan law enforcement officers who witnessed firsthand the abuse of forfeiture, we urge legislators to safeguard the rights of property owners and reform this practice.

THEODORE NELSON

STEVEN MILLER

and forfeits them for minor legal violations.

The original intention behind civil asset forfeiture was to seize key assets from high-level drug dealers or other serious criminals and funnel that money to police departments, which could then be used to fight more crime. But it has since been used far beyond that original intent. Today in Michigan, forfeiture is mostly used to seize cars and small amounts of cash — generally less than \$1,000. And most problematically, according to the most recent state report, nearly 1,000 people — just last year — had their assets transferred to the state despite not being charged with criminal activity, or being found not guilty.

We witnessed people guilty of only minor violations, or innocent altogether, who had hundreds of dollars or their vehicles seized and forfeited. When that happens, it would often be more expensive to file a lawsuit — not to mention the time and effort involved — than to just let the police keep the property. Police know this, and they know that if the owner doesn't fight the forfeiture, the profits go back to the police department. Some agencies

seize money with a goal of just bolstering their budgets.

Law enforcement can only be effective with support and trust from the public it serves. Civil asset forfeiture undermines that trust. Reform needs to be instituted so that law enforcement can refocus on protecting and serving. This would reaffirm the public's constitutional right as recognized by the 14th Amendment: "No state shall ... deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

We think forfeiture can be a valid tool for law enforcement. Criminals should not be able to keep the assets they gained through illegal activity. But judges and juries should decide whether a person is guilty before the government gains control of someone's property.

Theodore Nelson is a retired officer from the Michigan State Police. Steven Miller is a retired sergeant from the Canton Township Police Department.

A version of this piece first appeared in The Detroit News. It is reprinted with permission from the authors.

One of us, **Theodore Nelson**,

served the public for the past 40 years — 26 as a Michigan State Police officer and 14 as a criminal justice instructor. During his career with the MSP, he taught civil asset forfeiture procedure to all state police officers for over 10 years.

The other, **Steven Miller**,

was a sergeant for the Canton Township Police Department and an officer for nearly 25 years. He was a patrol officer and supervisor for Wayne County's "Operation Push-Off," which seizes cars and cash

Celebrating the Miracle of Individual Liberty

Marvin Carlson grew up in the suburbs of Detroit, where he was born in 1945. He married his high school sweetheart, Susan, and pursued his doctorate in political science at the University of Michigan. While working as an urban planner for the city of Ann Arbor, Carlson began

acquiring and rehabbing run-down residential and commercial rental properties. His work has earned him several local and national awards for excellence in historic restoration.

In the 1980s, Carlson and his wife bought and restored a Victorian-era farmstead named “Sugarbush Farm,” where they raised national champion purebred Charolais beef cattle. The passing of his Great-Uncle Otto, with whom he shared a close

relationship, inspired him to become a writer. Otto’s life story “personified the ‘common man’s’ challenged journey to this land of opportunity,” so in 2016, Carlson wrote and published “The Stone Circle.” He describes it as a “fictionalized account of Otto’s early life in Sweden, passing from boy to man before setting out for America to fulfill his destiny.” The Carlsons have been married for 54 years, and they split their time between homes in Michigan and coastal South Carolina, providing Marvin the opportunity for his new pursuit, competitive small sailboat racing.

Because education is important to the Carlsons, they have supported the

nationwide charter school movement from the beginning. For example, they have made a substantial financial investment in the Savannah Classical Academy, part of the charter school initiative sponsored by Hillsdale College. The academy draws its students from the poorly served inner core of Savannah, Georgia, and teaches values like self-reliance and study discipline. Carlson says “the pernicious tyranny of low expectation is replaced by high standards of achievement at the academy. The large waiting list of parents wishing to enroll their kids who are chosen by lottery, speaks to the failure of public schools in the city of Savannah.”

I had the opportunity to speak to Carlson about why he and his wife are so active in supporting both choice in education and the Mackinac Center. He said, “The current progressive socialist movement is so corrosive to our heritage of personal liberty and economic freedom that it must be challenged and ultimately defeated. Education is key to this end. Our schools must once again teach American history and its founding in a manner that celebrates the miracle of individual liberty and its handmaiden, private property. As a teaching fellow at the University of Michigan, I taught classes in Marxist thought. In addition to [explaining] its ideological structure, I also emphasized its historical context, wherein millions of people caught in the grip of Marxist praxis were murdered and starved to achieve a ‘classless’ society. Simple exposure to the grim historic reality of socialist movements over the last 120 years will be the surest remedy to the fantasy of collective leveling currently in fashion.” ■



MACKINAC CENTER HONORS TOP CAP SCHOOL



The gathering to honor Michigan's top-ranked high school felt almost as much like a family reunion as a celebration. On Feb. 7, hundreds of Michigan Mathematics and Science Academy students, teachers and parents assembled to hear a musical performance and watch the Mackinac Center present a special plaque.

The high school at MMSA, a public charter school authorized by Grand Valley State University, earned the top spot on the latest edition of our Context and Performance Report Card.

The CAP Report Card gives its highest recognition to schools that overcome obstacles associated with poverty. It takes that approach because there is a strong statistical relationship between higher poverty and lower achievement. "Mackinac Center's CAP Report Card has not only honored our school as the best in the state of Michigan but also motivated us to continue providing the best education possible for our students," MMSA superintendent Oguzhan Yildiz said.

Public charter schools made up less than 12 percent of the schools on our high school report card but earned eight of the top 17 scores. For the first time in four editions, Star International Academy in Dearborn Heights walked away with second place rather than first. Not because Star International lost ground, but because an upstart fellow charter did even better.

CAP Scores are assigned based on how well a school does compared to the expected result, given the share of its students in poverty. A score of 100 indicates that expectations have been met, but MMSA scored 143.32, breaking the old record. In doing so, MMSA became the most prominent example of how a class full of students in poverty can exceed expectations.

Michigan Mathematics and Science Academy is part of the Concept Schools network, a nonprofit charter management company based in Chicago, with schools across the Midwest and Great Lakes region. MMSA's success is a testament to

the caring, trusting relationships between staff and students, built on hard work and sacrifice. That trust is crucial to help students put their best efforts into tests that provide state officials with a key measurement of the school's quality.

"In order for students to buy in, you have to make them understand why we are here as a family," said Sedat Duman, president and CEO of Concept Schools. "If they start trusting you, then you are going to be able to start leveraging their energy."

Many teachers have given up weekend and holiday time to invest in students outside the traditional school day, providing extra academic help, and more. During this school year alone, staff members have visited 60 percent of their students at home to build a personal connection and see firsthand the challenges they bring to school.

Reflecting the school's strong sense of community, the celebration attracted recent graduates Justin Wilton, a freshman at the University of Michigan, and Jamya

Horton, who joined the Army National Guard. Both testified of caring teachers and the value of participating in the Concept Youth Scholars Program, which motivates students toward community volunteering, personal enrichment and extended field trip explorations.

More than 93 percent of MMSA's low-income students attend class on a typical

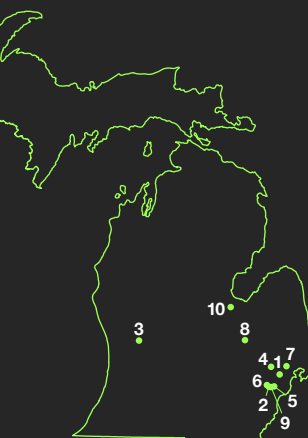
day, including some students who take as many as three different mass transit buses to get to school. "There is something good that we are doing here," said Yildiz.

The school's success is rooted in a family environment where staff members push students to reach their potential, and students are motivated to respond. "They need an adult who cares about them

— not only in words, but in actions," Duman said. ■

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

TOP 10 SCHOOLS OVERALL



Rank	School	CAP Score
1	Michigan Mathematics and Science Academy Middle/High Charter	143.32
2	Star International Academy Charter	141.30
3	City Middle/High School Selective	131.88
4	International Academy Selective	130.90
5	Riverside Academy - West Campus Charter	130.34
6	Universal Learning Academy Charter	126.08
7	International Academy of Macomb Selective	126.00
8	Genesee Early College Selective	123.31
9	Henry Ford Early College Selective	123.18
10	Saginaw Arts and Sciences Academy Selective	123.02

A CAP Score of 100 means a school performed as expected on state tests, given student poverty levels.

Learn more at: MACKINAC.ORG/CAP2018





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National School Choice Week 2019

The last week of January marks a nationwide celebration of freedom of choice in education. People gather to promote the different types of school choice: homeschooling, charter schools, traditional public schools, magnet schools and private schools.

Despite a winter storm, supporters of school choice from around the state gathered to celebrate National School

Choice Week at the Michigan Capitol. Mackinac Center employees were joined by parents and students who have exercised school choice, as well as by the educators and administrators who help make education a reality.

The event, co-hosted by the Mackinac Center and the Michigan Association of Public School Academies, was the spotlight event of a record-breaking

1,394 events and activities across the state.

School choice has long existed in Michigan but was bolstered in 1994 when then-Gov. John Engler signed a law to create a legal framework for public charter schools. As educational opportunities such as online learning and magnet programs have grown, so has choice, which gives parents the



Ben DeGrow poses with a representative from Connections Academy. A student calls in to the event from home, through an iPad.

freedom to choose the educational path that is best for their children and their families.

At the event, we had the privilege of interviewing some students, parents, and teachers, and learned about what school choice means for them.

Samantha Roberts, a teacher (and parent) with Iron Mountain Homeschool Partnership, explained how public schools can work with homeschool groups to

create a blended educational environment for students. Through partnerships, students have access to Michigan certified teachers in an online program, or they can simply choose to enroll in one of the various electives that are offered, including art, music and culinary classes. The Roberts family participates in the part of the program known as shared-time electives.

Roberts' daughter Emma has been a part of IMHP for the past three years. "My favorite

subject that I get to learn about is cooking. I get to do that as one of my classes online and learn over the computer."

Andrew, a senior at West Catholic High School in Grand Rapids, explained how attending a private school has benefited him. "The social experiences at a private school are a lot easier than public schools. It's a closer community — I have about 150 kids in my graduating class. We also have a small student-to-teacher ratio, which means we get a lot more individualized attention, which I like."

One of the more unusual interviews was with Ethan, a ninth-grader at Michigan Connections Academy. We spoke to him through an iPad, using the same program that he uses every day for class. Ethan's been a part of virtual schooling for the past seven years, after going to a traditional public school for a few years. He likes that he's able to do school whenever he needs to and appreciates that the teachers are always available and willing to answer his questions. Ethan also physically benefits from virtual schooling. Due to some medical problems, it's best for him to remain at home instead of being in a classroom with additional germs.

Education is not a one-size-fits-all matter. Students have different needs, and parents should be able to make decisions regarding their child's education. National School Choice Week gives us an opportunity to celebrate freedom of choice in education and remember why it's so valuable. ■

Holly Wetzel is the communications coordinator at the Mackinac Center.



Media Corner



Holly Wetzel
Communications Coordinator

The Mackinac Center continues to be the go-to source for free-market perspectives in Michigan — especially for media outlets. Over the first few months of this year, we’ve had the opportunity to speak on a variety of issues on the local, state and national level.

We kicked off the year with commentaries on the first item of the Legislature’s agenda — civil asset forfeiture. We’ve done a lot of work on this topic (you can read more about that in this issue of IMPACT), which many news publishers recognized, including the Detroit Free Press, The Detroit News and Bridge Magazine. Jarrett Skorup, our director of communications and marketing, and resident expert on forfeiture, also spoke to multiple radio shows across the state on the topic.

The Mackinac Center released the 2018 Michigan Public High School Context and Performance Report Card, which gives parents an updated tool for comparing schools while taking into consideration their various demographic profiles. Local newspapers like The Monroe News, The Antrim Review, Gaylord Herald Times and even MLive took the opportunity to recognize how schools in their areas performed (both positively and negatively).

Gov. Whitmer’s first State of the State address provided a look at some of the governor’s policy priorities, which the Mackinac Center was happy to comment on. While we’ve publicly expressed reservations about some of the governor’s

initiatives, we were able to find some common ground. The Detroit Free Press published an op-ed written by Michael Reitz, our executive vice president. In the piece, Reitz emphasizes the importance of increasing government transparency, saying, “Bipartisan accomplishments may be difficult to come by with Michigan’s shared government. Shining a light on government operations is one thing the state’s leaders can, and should, get done.”

The release of the governor’s first budget proposal gave plenty of opportunities for our fiscal policy staff to provide an analysis on state funding — primarily roads. Not only were they featured in nearly all of the usual statewide print and radio outlets, but their ideas were also featured in an op-ed in Bridge Magazine written by Sen. Peter Lucido.

The Mackinac Center continues to reach a national audience through opinion pieces published in some of the Beltway’s most well-known newspapers, including The Hill and the Washington Examiner. The New York Times published a feature about the Overton Window of Political Possibility, a concept originating from former Mackinac Center Senior Vice President Joseph Overton. The Times offered extensive quotes from Mackinac Center President Joseph Lehman, who said that the window “just explains how ideas come in and out of fashion, the same way that gravity explains why something falls to the earth.” ■



Mackinac Launches National “Workers for Opportunity” Initiative To Advance Employee Freedom

On Feb. 26, the one-year anniversary of the oral arguments in *Janus v. AFSCME*, the Mackinac Center launched a national initiative to advance policy reforms that expand employee freedom across the country. This new initiative, Workers for Opportunity, is a natural extension of the Mackinac Center’s 30-plus years of successfully fighting for the rights of public employees in Michigan. It builds on the momentum generated by our national awareness campaign, My Pay My Say, which informs public employees of their Janus rights. The Center has helped 129,000 union members across Michigan exercise their freedom of association (and save thousands in dues) over the last decade. We have also helped another 11,000 union members nationwide since the Janus decision. This record has prepared us to succeed in a new mission: *Free the American workforce from all compulsion from labor relations, with restored rights to associate with, bargain with and support whomever employees choose, without fear of government retribution.*

We are committed to working with allies, lawmakers, administrations and others to advance these policy objectives in 2019:

- 1. Transparency and implementation of Janus rights:** Even before the Janus decision, unions were working with lawmakers and administrations in certain states to make it more difficult for employees to stop paying them. States should re-examine these policies to determine if any of them violate the Supreme Court’s expressed intent, which is that dues or fees may be collected only after the employee has provided clear and affirmative consent.
- 2. Right-to-work:** Public employees across the country can now choose whether to pay a union. But in 23 states,

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unions can still get private sector employees fired for not paying them. All workers deserve the right to decide whether to support a union.

- 3. Worker voting rights (union recertification):** Most public employees have not had an opportunity to vote on the union at their workplace. Public employees deserve the right to periodically vote on which union, if any, represents them in.
- 4. Public Employee Rights and Reauthorization Act (Opt In):** The Janus decision restored public employees’ First Amendment rights to choose whether to pay union dues, and it requires affirmative consent from employees before such dues can be collected. PERRA seeks to codify these rights in each state.

This reform agenda of Workers for Opportunity is supported by a team of seasoned experts in labor policy, law, government affairs and communications. Even before the initiative launched, team members had already visited with or advised lawmakers, members of administrations and allies in 15 states.

Coalition-building continues to be a cornerstone of our efforts and will be critical for achieving policy victories. The Mackinac Center has a track record of building strong partnerships in Michigan and across the country. It intends to build upon the most recent success of the My Pay My Say campaign, which has grown to a network of strong state and national partners in 17 states. ■

Lindsay Killen is the vice president for strategic outreach and communications at the Mackinac Center. To learn more, visit workersforopportunity.org.

BY THE NUMBERS CIVIL ASSET FORFEITURE

\$13.1 million

Amount of assets, mostly cash and cars, taken from Michigan citizens via civil asset forfeiture.

220

Number of people who were charged with a crime but then found not guilty but still had their assets taken by law enforcement.

736

Number of people who lost property despite not being charged with a crime.

All numbers from the 2017 state civil asset forfeiture report, the most recent year available.



My Smartwatch Inadvertently Humbled Me.

A smartwatch has several features to motivate its wearer to exercise. One of these features on my Samsung Gear issues an alert, “Great workout, keep it up!” after it senses an increased heartrate.

For me, a former collegiate athlete who was in peak physical condition well into his 30s, an alert like that could be welcomed in the middle of a rigorous workout. A few days ago, however, the alert went off after only three kicks of a leg. I was simply trying to load a log into my outdoor wood boiler, not exercise.

The alert sounded sarcastic, not sincere. I was motivated, but not in the positive manner the watchmaker probably intended. The device humbled me, for it might well have said, “Get back in shape; you’re hardly moving, and your heart rate is already increasing.” (The fact that this came from an impersonal piece of electronics and not a coach, friend, or personal trainer, made it even worse).

Will there be a correction in the market for this smartwatch function? Maybe not? Perhaps people like me will set a goal to never receive



JIM WALKER

is the vice president for advancement at the Mackinac Center.

an alert like this unless we’re actually exercising. If so, it served its purpose. And maybe other people in a similar situation will think, “Neat, I actually got in a little workout.” The point is that a well-intended piece of communication can be misinterpreted by the person on the receiving end.

The Mackinac Center communicates with you in many ways, and our ideal is to be pitch-perfect. Knowing we can always improve in this area — and the ideal is hard to hit all the time — we occasionally survey our friends to learn how we can get better. Later this year, we’ll conduct a survey via mail, email and phone. We want to hear from you so that we don’t unintentionally communicate something to our friends, like the watchmaker did with me.

If you’d like to share how we can improve our communication with you in advance of the survey, please contact the advancement office at **989-631-0900** and I or someone from our team will respond promptly. ■