

# IMPACT



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FROM  
THE  
WEB

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**“I would like to thank my friends at the Mackinac Center for all they have done to help me be a better advocate for individual liberty.”**

— *from a supporter in Michigan.*

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# Making Waves

WITH THE MACKINAC CENTER

Join us for a sunset cruise on the Saginaw River!

Current state budget and tax debates are presenting a river of opportunity for reforms. Join the Mackinac Center to hear the latest on important state fiscal policy topics.

**WHEN**

**Wednesday, August 28, 2019**

Boarding: 5:30 p.m.

Departure: 6:00 p.m.

Dinner and program: 6:30 – 9:00 p.m.

**WHERE**

**Aboard the Islander**

Bay City Boat Lines

1201 Evergreen Drive

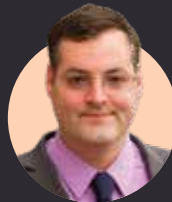
Bay City, MI 48706

*Keynote Speakers*



**Michael LaFaive**

Senior director of fiscal policy  
at the Mackinac Center



**James Hohman**

Director of fiscal policy  
at the Mackinac Center

Deadline to RSVP is Monday, August 19, 2019.

Tickets are \$30 per guest.

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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT



MACKINAC CENTER  
FOR PUBLIC POLICY

# Michigan's Laboratory for Liberty

We often say the Mackinac Center is a state-based think tank with national impact and an international following. This year is bursting with examples.

This spring, my family visited Rancho del Cielo, the longtime home of Ronald and Nancy Reagan. The ranch, beautifully preserved by Young America's Foundation, is a tribute to President Reagan's optimism and humility, and the American ideal.

Next to the ranch in Santa Barbara is the Reagan Ranch Center. I saw three direct connections to the Mackinac Center in the gift shop. One was a book from president emeritus Larry Reed, "Excuse Me, Professor." A second book, "The Myth of the Robber Barons," was from senior fellow Burt Folsom. The third item was Paul Kengor's book "11 Principles of a Reagan Conservative," in which he acknowledges the research contributions of our director of marketing and communications, Jarrett Skorup.

Each year, the University of Pennsylvania ranks more than 8,000 think tanks worldwide, 1,872 of which are in the United States. The latest report placed the Mackinac Center in the top 5% of U.S. think tanks.

The Overton Window of Political Possibility, a model conceived and popularized by the Mackinac Center, is part of the political and cultural lexicon. In February, The New York Times did an excellent job examining the idea, and in April, a popular TV show ran an episode named "Overton Window."

Our policy ideas continue to take root in Michigan, even with the recent political realignment. In May, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer signed her third bill that contained a Mackinac Center idea; reforms to civil asset forfeiture, auto insurance and criminal justice are now law.

The Trump administration is also adopting our policy recommendations, proving the maxim that states are the laboratories for democracy. Our director of environmental policy, Jason Hayes, presented his research on public lands to U.S. Forest Service officials, and the agency recently announced plans that allow for better uses of federal lands.

In May, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services published a new rule that prohibits unions from skimming dues off the payments Medicaid sends to home health care providers. This should sound familiar to long-time Mackinac Center supporters. We discovered this problem in Michigan in 2009. Our creative team gave it a name — "dues skim" — that is now universally used. We killed the SEIU skim in Michigan in 2013 and contributed to litigation that led to a favorable U.S. Supreme Court ruling. Still, the practice continued in nearly a dozen states, costing vulnerable adults \$200 million annually by our estimate. When President Trump took office, our team provided research and recommendations for the federal rule.

The dues skim has given the Mackinac Center the opportunity to use its capacities as a beacon for freedom: Our journalists reported extensively, our legal team drove the issue in the courts and our policy and outreach teams laid the foundation for significant policy change. ■

You can find more about the dues skim on page 10.

**MICHAEL J. REITZ**

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140 West Main Street, P.O. Box 568  
Midland, Michigan 48640  
989-631-0900, Fax 989-631-0964  
www.mackinac.org mcpp@mackinac.org

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JOHN LAPLANTE Editor  
ILIA VANDERHOOF Designer

# Janus Anniversary Event in California

One year ago, in June 2018, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a long-overdue ruling that

**JARRETT  
SKORUP**

benefited public sector workers across the country. It said they cannot be forced to join or financially support a labor union in order to hold a job. This decision freed millions of teachers, bus drivers, state employees, local government workers, police officers, firemen and others — anyone who is employed by a public entity.

In other words, right-to-work went nationwide.

In 2012, Michigan became a right-to-work state. Since then, the Mackinac Center has fought to expand worker rights in the courtroom and through the Legislature.

reached hundreds of thousands of public employees, partnered in more than a dozen states and launched a number of lawsuits.

To celebrate these efforts and the anniversary of the court decision, the Mackinac Center co-hosted an all-day event in California. Our partners included the California Policy Center, Liberty Justice Center, National Review Institute and Reform California. Mark Janus, the plaintiff in the historic case, was a notable participant, as was former California Gov. Pete Wilson.

The celebration featured several panels of experts, politicians and public employees who have made the decision to leave their union. Staffers from the Mackinac Center

district. For that reason, it has been a focal point of our efforts to inform workers of their rights. We've reached tens of thousands of government union members through digital advertising, mail, phone calls and door knocking. This effort was on display at the anniversary event, with a room full of workers and volunteers making phone calls.

California is home to about 1.3 million public sector workers, and government unions there take in around a billion dollars of dues every single year, making the state ground zero in the fight over Janus rights. Its public sector unions are pushing legislation to prevent workers from leaving their union and restrict their ability to learn about their rights. This activity keeps the money flowing



Jarrett Skorup, far right, speaks on a panel discussing how the Janus decision came to be.

We've also informed hundreds of thousands of workers here in Michigan about those rights. Over the years, more than 100,000 workers have made the decision to leave their union.

When the high court announced its ruling in Janus, the Mackinac Center was ready. We launched an advertising, informational and legal campaign to help expand worker freedom nationwide. One year later, we've

discussed our legal work leading up to the Janus case. They also talked about our efforts to inform public employees of their renewed rights, the ongoing legal fight (with dozens of new lawsuits) and the effects on union membership so far.

Los Angeles has one of the highest concentrations of union workers in the country. It's the largest county in America and has the nation's second-largest school

from government workers to politicians, political groups and ballot proposals.

The fight for worker freedom doesn't stop at Michigan's border. So, while the Mackinac Center continues the work in our home state, we're also working across the country. ■

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



The Mackinac Center is excited to announce the launch of a new movement — Opportunity Michigan — which will equip individuals from all walks of life with the tools and resources they need to make an impact on policy change that affects themselves and their families.

Change begins with the people of Michigan working together for a more free and prosperous state.

That change can start simply with one individual taking an action, **causing a ripple effect** that can't be ignored.

We're building an **interconnected network** where we can share information, connect with each other, and make our voices heard.

Our community can inspire positive change by uniting behind one common goal:

**Creating a brighter future  
for our state.**

# Changing Policy Starts at Home

## Mackinac Center launches initiative to help get people involved in policy decisions

By Taylor Piotrowski

As a native Michigander, I'm concerned about the state's well-being. Of course, a large part of this well-being comes directly from Michigan's policies and how they affect all Michiganders. This concern was so near and dear to my heart that I focused on state and local politics in college and, after graduation, I joined the Mackinac Center as a full-time member of the staff.

That said, full-time policy work isn't a possibility for everyone. You could care deeply about public policy but not be at a place where you can drop everything and dedicate your life to it. It's also possible to care about policy but have no idea where to start or how to make a difference. Taking that first step can be really hard, and that's where Opportunity Michigan comes in.

Opportunity Michigan is the Mackinac Center's new initiative aimed at providing everyone with the skills, outlets, and tools they need to help make policy changes, both at Lansing and at home. The best part

about Opportunity Michigan? It can be completely tailored to your passions.

There are many ways to get involved, from low-commitment options, like signing up for policy updates about specific issues, to more active options, like attending events and connecting to others within the network. Operation Michigan seeks to create an active network that allows individuals who are passionate about policy to connect with each other and work toward meaningful change for all people.

It can be hard, as one person, to feel like you have a voice. That's why it's so important to connect with like-minded individuals who are just as passionate about making a difference. Together, we can work to make Michigan the best place it can be for all of its residents.

If you want to learn more about Opportunity Michigan and how you can get involved, check out our website: [OpportunityMichigan.org](http://OpportunityMichigan.org). ■

To learn more and sign up, please visit:

**[OpportunityMichigan.com](http://OpportunityMichigan.com)**



**Lisa Grega**, an employee of The College of New Jersey; **Jody Lutter**, a psychiatric nurse in Essex County; ; and **Michael Kopie**, an employee of the state Department of Transportation





# Mackinac Center Opens Lawsuit in New Jersey

## Following Janus decision, state governments are fighting to keep workers in unions

By Taylor Piotrowski

After their victory in last year's Supreme Court case *Janus v. AFSCME*, it should be easy for workers to exercise their right to opt out of paying a union. But what should have been a decisive victory for all public workers has turned into an ongoing battle. Unions have resisted the decision, doing whatever they can to force workers to stay, whether it be through scare tactics or the force of new laws.

One such law is New Jersey's Workplace Democracy Enhancement Act, passed in May 2018. Under this law, a public worker's right to opt out is restricted to a mere 10-day "window period" following the anniversary of that person's "date of hire." To make matters more confusing, the language defining "date of hire" is vague, making it harder to determine when those 10 days actually are. This law was enacted a month before the Supreme Court's ruling, in an attempt to make it harder for union members to exercise their right of choice. After New Jersey enacted this law, workers who tried to opt out of paying a union were still subjected to their employer withholding money for the union's benefit.

Jody Lutter, a psychiatric nurse in Essex County; Lisa Grega, an employee of The College of New Jersey; and Michael Kopie, an employee of the state Department of Transportation, were three of these workers. After being blocked from opting out, all three turned to the Mackinac Center Legal Foundation, which filed suit against their respective unions.

"My voice is definitely not heard being a member of this union" said Michael Kopie. "I want to be able to withdraw from this union any time I want, not in a 10-day window."

While the workers are hoping to opt out of their union, they also want the union to refund the money it took from them after they first tried to opt out. All three hope that this case will allow others to exercise their freedom to opt out, and have greater implications moving forward.

If the court rules in their favor, that will mean a lot for worker freedom in New Jersey and across the country. By calling for an end to the window requirement, Lutter, Grega, Kopie and Mackinac Center Legal

Foundation hope to set a precedent for hundreds of thousands of other workers who are trapped by similar obstacles. The *Janus* decision should have made it easy for workers to opt out, since it implied that unions need to get consent from workers before they can take even a cent out of their paycheck. Instead, workers must continue to fight for their constitutional rights. ■

Taylor Piotrowski is the projects and external affairs coordinator at the Mackinac Center.

# Ending the 'Dues Skim' in Michigan

## How the government was stopped from taking money from paychecks

Under the dues skim, Medicaid payments meant to aid the elderly and disabled were diverted to unions. In Michigan, \$31,317,790.40 was taken by March 2012. The skim, which began in 2004, was not completely over until 2013. The end came after there had been legislation, multiple court cases, and a failed union effort to permit the skim via a constitutional amendment.

The skim continued in other states, however. In 2014, the U.S. Supreme Court held in *Harris v. Quinn* that charging home-help workers agency fees was unconstitutional. Unions, following a pattern they established in Michigan, have tried across the country to subvert that decision. A new federal rule based on a Mackinac Center idea is the latest chapter in this story. It aims to end these union efforts by making it illegal for Medicaid payments to go to anyone other than the care recipient or his or her provider.

The dues skim was an effort by unions to increase their membership and revenue. Under it, they claimed that anyone whose clients received public aid was really doing governmental work and could be unionized as a governmental employee by public sector unions. Unionization then happened even though the employer was the person receiving care and the provider was a private person.

As explained in the Mackinac Center's amicus brief in *Harris v. Quinn*, the

**PATRICK WRIGHT**

dues skim began on the West Coast and eventually made its way across the country. In Michigan, the Granholm administration created a fake employer — the Michigan Quality Community Care Council — to give the unions a governmental entity to organize against. This entity was created surreptitiously so as not to be detected by the Legislature. An “election” then occurred, in which 8,000 of the 40,000 providers voted. That was enough for the Service Employees International Union, or SEIU, to be named as the collective bargaining agent for providers.

The Mackinac Center discovered and publicized the dues skim in various ways. A “skim tracker,” for example, appeared in articles Michigan Capitol Confidential published about the scheme. The Legislature ended the funding to the council, so the SEIU started to finance it, even as the council's director collected unemployment insurance. In 2012, the Legislature also amended the public bargaining law to make it clear that such providers were not public employees who could be

unionized. The unions then sued and also sought to amend Michigan's constitution to permit the skim. The voters rejected this attempt. It was only a few months later that the skim ended.

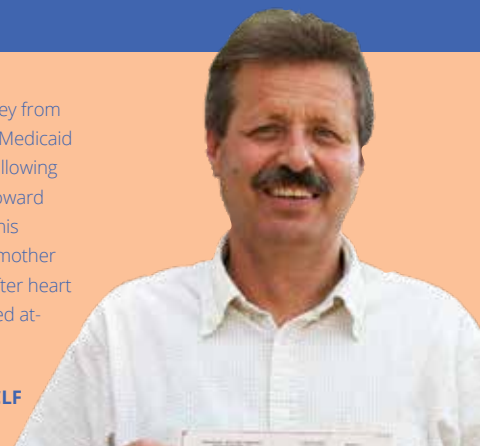
Nationally, the unions have put up a similar fight after *Harris v. Quinn*. With the help of sympathetic state legislatures and executives, they continued to divert around \$200 million in Medicaid funds, despite the Supreme Court's decision. The new federal rule should stop these union work-arounds. No money will be skimmed and given to the union.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the state of California and some unions have filed a federal lawsuit seeking to overturn the rule. Thus, the national battle to finally end the dues skim will continue for now, but the Mackinac Center will continue to work to end this injustice, as we did in Michigan. ■

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

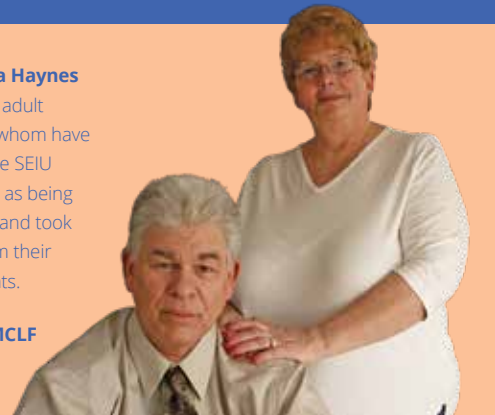
The SEIU took money from **Steven Glossop's** Medicaid checks, instead of allowing that money to go toward Glossop caring for his mother. Glossop's mother suffered a stroke after heart surgery and required at-home care.

[mackinac.org/MCLF](http://mackinac.org/MCLF)



**Bob and Patricia Haynes** care for their two adult children, both of whom have cerebral palsy. The SEIU categorized them as being part of the union and took 'dues money' from their Medicaid payments.

[mackinac.org/MCLF](http://mackinac.org/MCLF)



# Analysis: A Good First Half

## Lawmakers, governor, reform auto insurance, civil asset forfeiture

Divided government — such as we have in Michigan for the next four years — means that no policy moves unless there is a meaningful measure of support from members of both parties. Without Republicans as sponsors on a bill, legislative leadership is not going to schedule it; without Democrats as “ayes” on the vote, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer is not going to sign it.

This dynamic requires groups like the Mackinac Center to be more creative about finding policy angles that bring elements of the Right and Left together to move good ideas forward. I am pleased to report we are doing just that, with two significant victories in the first half of 2019 and more possible in the second half.

In 1989, the Mackinac Center published its first study on Michigan’s horrific auto insurance system. After three decades of research, outreach, and exasperation on our part, Gov. Whitmer signed reform legislation in late May. It includes the two changes we have advocated for consistently: consumer choice in Personal Injury Protection and a fee schedule for accident-related medical services.

The law is not perfect, as the negotiated text contains internal contradictions and definitional gaps that will need to be resolved over the next year. But once it’s implemented, Michigan motorists should see substantial savings on what have been America’s most costly auto insurance premiums.

Another long-standing research priority came to fruition earlier in May with the signing of asset forfeiture reform legislation. The new law protects Michiganders’ property and due process rights by

requiring a criminal conviction before law enforcement can permanently forfeit their property.

**DAVID  
GUENTHNER**

A few years ago, Michigan had the worst rated forfeiture laws in America; today, Michigan stands among the states with the best legal protections.

We are working with legislators and organizational partners across the spectrum on other policy advances for the second half of the year, such as:



- Identifying additional funding for road construction and maintenance in lieu of a 45-cent-per-gallon gasoline tax increase;



- Extending Michigan’s open records law to cover the governor’s office and the Legislature;



- Restraining and pruning Michigan’s overly expansive occupational licensing regime;



- Improving the Healthy Michigan program’s work requirements rather than weakening or repealing them;



- Repealing excessive, inappropriate, and unused criminal statutes; and



- Promoting greater transparency and accountability in Michigan’s corporate welfare programs.

There will come a time between now and November 2020 when both parties need to go to their corners and come out fighting to show their electoral bases that they’re faithful to their principles and priorities. It has already started in Wisconsin, where the governor and lawmakers have been in a death match from day one. And to be sure, there have been some skirmishes here over the governor’s move to eliminate three environmental advisory committees, the proposed tunnel for Enbridge’s Line 5 pipeline, and legal opinions challenging recently adopted legislation.

But thankfully, Michigan’s elected leaders have recognized that this year is a time to find a few areas of common ground, get those things done, and have some accomplishments to show for their time in Lansing. And when the story of 2019 is written, the Mackinac Center will have been in the middle of many of those accomplishments. ■

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



This study is available online at [Mackinac.org/s2019-05](https://mackinac.org/s2019-05).

A MACKINAC CENTER REPORT

# Workforce Development in Michigan

SARAH ESTELLE



# Workforce Development is Best Provided in the Private Sector

Many policymakers think there's a "skills gap" — meaning state residents don't have the skills employers need — and conclude that government should spend more taxpayer money on workforce development programs to close the gap.

But what do such programs look like today? We decided to find out, and got some help from Sarah Estelle, an associate professor of economics at Hope College and experienced labor economist.

She looked at workforce development programs throughout Michigan. State and local governments run many of them. Others are run by school districts, community colleges, universities, trade associations, labor association, for-profit companies and nonprofits.

Her research suggests that state and local governments actually provide very little skills training. Most of the programs run by or funded by the state are job-matching or career counseling services. They might help some people find a job, but they do little to train workers for high-skilled jobs, which is how these programs are typically sold to the public.

Instead, nearly all taxpayer-funded skills training happens where it has happened for decades: career and technical centers run by school districts and at community colleges. Unfortunately, the data we have can't tell us if they are successful.

The most effective workforce development efforts that happen in Michigan appear to come from the private sector. Some business associations and labor unions provide robust training opportunities that give workers tangible skills.

Based on this research, our new study recommends that taxpayers be skeptical of the government's ability to provide the skills training the labor market needs. Instead, it argues, the private sector should take care of this problem. In brief, businesses can raise wages for skills in short supply and pay to train workers when needed. Since businesses benefit the most from highly skilled workers, they should bear the brunt of training costs — not taxpayers. ■





# The Policy Circle

In May, the Mackinac Center had the pleasure of hosting Sylvie Légère, president and co-founder of The Policy Circle. This network of local groups offers women a way to connect through engaging in policy discussions that encourage human creativity in a free-market economy. Currently, The Policy Circle is made up of 252 circles across 38 states.

**HOLLY  
WETZEL**

The idea is simple. Two or three women who are interested in discussing policy form a small group known as a circle. A circle can be big or small. The goal is for it to grow organically, but it is often made up of women with a variety of life experiences who may or may not know each other personally. Once a group is created, its participants meet in person for a roundtable discussion. The policy briefs they receive beforehand provide background information about the gathering's topic and cover education, poverty, taxation, economic growth or another issue.

When people talk about government, they usually focus on what politicians or political parties are doing. Unless you have a strong interest in public policy or work in the policy world, you usually don't have a chance to learn about or engage in policy issues that affect your life. Through its local groups, The Policy Circle gives women the opportunities and resources needed to engage in discussions on national policies from a free-market approach.

Having a discussion in someone's living room is useful in itself, but many participants take their interest beyond that. Through discussions about policies on the national level, some members are inspired to learn more about how policies work at the state level. If they are interested, they can turn to the Mackinac Center and other state-based groups to find out how those policies are affecting their everyday lives. Discussing policy can also cause a person to educate

others and cause them to be involved. Participants in policy circles raise awareness about different policies through sharing an article on social media, discussing a piece of legislation with a neighbor, or becoming a part of a group like Opportunity Michigan. (You can read more about Opportunity Michigan on page 7.)

"The Policy Circle offers women a way to belong to and connect with a community of women interested in engaging public policies that encourage human creativity and accomplishment. It is an honor to collaborate with Sylvie and The Policy Circle. I encourage Mackinac Center supporters to join or start their own circle in Michigan, and to register to attend The Policy Circle's annual Summit in Chicago in November."

— Joseph Lehman  
President of the Mackinac Center

The possibilities for an engaged citizenry are endless. The Policy Circle offers a safe and empowering space for women to become involved. Through open dialogue, women can be equipped with the tools they need to make a difference.

Holly Wetzel is the communications coordinator at the Mackinac Center.

Learn more about the Policy Circle by visiting [www.thepolicycircle.org](http://www.thepolicycircle.org)



# Mackinac Center Events Recap

The Mackinac Center for Public Policy hosts regular forums on different public policy issues facing the state of Michigan. Below are brief summaries of recent events. To learn more about these past events and to watch video recaps, or to view upcoming events, please visit [Mackinac.org/Events](https://Mackinac.org/Events).



**Above:** On June 5, Joshua Rivera presented on the price of auto insurance in Michigan and what options Michiganders can expect as new auto insurance laws go into effect. He also posed questions such as: Why is the price of insurance in Michigan so high? How does insurance in Michigan compare to insurance in other states? How do these insurance prices affect the average Michigan family, or those who have a lower income?

**Below:** On June 12, Dr. William Smith of the Pioneer Institute discussed how funding for medical procedures and conditions works. Some organizations have attempted to use “quality-adjusted life years” to decide which drugs to fund for which patients. While acceptable in theory, this system can end up limiting the options available for certain patients.





From left to right: Garrick Anderson, Ceanna Hayes, Madeline Peltzer, Iruoma Ezumba, Justin Witt, Emma Eisenman, Jacob Householder, Alina Malkowski, Hannah Wing and Aaron Lehman.

## Welcoming the 2019 Mackinac Center Interns

The Mackinac Center would like to welcome and introduce its interns for 2019.

Returning to Mackinac for a second internship, Aaron Lehman has joined the environmental policy staff this summer. Lehman is a sophomore at Grove City College, where he is pursuing a degree in general biology, studying philosophy and Greek, and serving as the president of the Sign Language Club.

Alina Malkowski is helping with events and serving as the Overton intern. She is a junior at Central Michigan University, studying dietetics. Malkowski is a Michigan native who loves to travel and admire the Great Lakes State.

Ceanna Hayes, who is in an internship program of the Charles Koch Institute, has joined the communications team at the Mackinac Center for the summer. A sophomore at Hillsdale College, she is

studying politics and serves as the vice president of Hillsdale's branch of Young Americans for Freedom. She aims to work in energy and environmental policy after she graduates.

Fiscal intern Chase Slasinski is joining Mackinac for his third summer. He is double-majoring in economics and political theory at the James Madison College of Michigan State University and is considering law school.



Emma Eisenman is a research intern, working on criminal justice policy, and a junior at Hillsdale College, where she studies German and international law. She is a member of the school's Mock Trial team and chapter of the Federalist Society, and serves as vice president of the German honor society, Delta Phi Alpha. Eisenman hopes to work in the German embassy in Washington, D.C., after college.

In his third summer at Mackinac, Garrick Anderson is working on environmental policy. He is studying philosophy at Thomas Edison State University. This fall, he will begin his eighth year of being involved in Christian Communicators of America, a homeschool debate league. Anderson will be a coach in the league for his third year.

Hannah Wing is the second Charles Koch intern this summer. A senior economics

major at Hillsdale College, she is working in education policy. She hopes to study economics in graduate school.

Iruoma Ezumba has joined the communications team for the summer. She earned her undergraduate law degree at Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Ezumba worked as an attorney and in the financial sector for 10 years before coming to the U.S. She is currently a graduate student at Central Michigan University, studying communications.

SPN fellow Jacob Householder is joining Mackinac's advancement department for the summer. He is a senior at Brigham Young University-Idaho, studying financial economics. Householder plans to work at the Madison Liberty Institute after graduation and intends to apply what he learns about development here at Mackinac.

Justin Witt is joining the advancement team this summer and will enter his freshman year at the University of Notre Dame this fall. He hopes to study business and is interested in politics and global affairs. Witt also founded the nonprofit Storybox Books, which promotes literacy and educational opportunities around the globe.

Madeline Peltzer is joining the Mackinac Center as this summer's Capitol Confidential intern. She is a junior at Hillsdale College, pursuing a degree in politics with a minor in journalism. Peltzer is the vice president of the Student Federation, a Dow Journalism Program fellow, an assistant news editor of the Hillsdale Collegian, and the founder and president of Hillsdale's chapter of Young Women for America. ■



## Introducing Taylor Piotrowski

The Mackinac Center is pleased to welcome Taylor Piotrowski as project and external affairs coordinator. Piotrowski works behind the scenes to connect people with the Mackinac Center Legal Foundation

and the government affairs team. She also helps manage My Pay My Say, Workers for Opportunity and Opportunity Michigan. (You can check out her story about Opportunity Michigan on page 7.) She was

previously a communications intern at the Mackinac Center in 2017 and 2018. ■





# Mackinac in the Media

With Michigan legislators not meeting during most of the summer, politics doesn't get much press coverage. Even so, the environment in which policymakers work is constantly being shaped by popular attitudes and expert opinion. Mackinac Center staff continue to produce new research and commentary to make sure there is a free-market voice in that environment.

Our research on Michigan's energy infrastructure continues to have a growing impact. For example, The Detroit News recently cited it in an editorial on Line 5 and the perils of depending on renewable energy. Readers of that publication can also read an op-ed by Jason Hayes about how, contrary to Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's rhetoric, Michigan's water quality has improved.

Summer is a big time for tourism, and state and local governments spend millions of taxpayer dollars to attract tourists. Michael LaFaive wrote about this spending in an op-ed for The Hill, saying, "Government tourism promotion efforts are unlikely to be cost-effective when an accurate accounting is made — despite what consultants, slick magazines and other advertisements may suggest."

Economic development subsidies are a trending topic, and LaFaive's comments on them were featured in articles in the Michigan Chronicle and the Detroit Metro Times.

Chris Douglas, a member of the Mackinac Center Board of Scholars, wrote a piece for Bridge Magazine on taxpayer-subsidized sports arenas. They are, he said, "an expensive psychological boost."

June marked the first anniversary of the Janus v. AFSCME decision. The Supreme Court case granted millions of workers across the country the freedom to choose whether they wish to financially support or be represented by a union. Many workers, though, still face barriers to using this freedom. The Mackinac Center Legal Foundation has filed a lawsuit to challenge New Jersey's barrier, an opt-out window. The Washington Times wrote about the suit, which was also featured in The Press of Atlantic City, one of New Jersey's largest daily papers.

Ben DeGrow wrote a piece on the challenges special-needs kids face in finding the best place to learn. Michigan's policies harm these students, he said, but two recent court rulings may help. Several newspapers published DeGrow's commentary, including the Holland Sentinel and the Brown City Banner. ■



*Holly Wetzel*  
Communications Coordinator

# The Visual Side to Public Policy Work

Jonathan VanDerhoof is the graphic designer at the Mackinac Center, where he has worked for seven years. In his current role, he is responsible for the visual elements that define the Mackinac Center brand and manages the artistic process from concept to completion.

Where do you even begin to design a cover for a study titled, “A State Compact to End Corporate Welfare”? Some designers get to create books with puppies on the cover, for crying out loud!

Being a creative arts professional in the public policy world can be jarring and, at times, frustrating. There’s a nonstop supply of difficult topics and publications to create interesting designs for, and I always come across a new maddening but fixable policy issue I had never even considered. The job requires me to digest and learn about complex new subjects so I can create insightful designs — no easy task. To top it all off, there are only a couple of people I can send design jokes to (although I guess that’s true no matter where I work).

All that being said, I love my job here. While I’m oftentimes the dumbest guy in the room (not an insult when you’re working with the brilliant minds here), I bring a different skillset to the table. Our authors are great at breaking down and explaining their ideas, but that doesn’t mean anything if we can’t convince a person to read what they wrote. The age-old saying “Never judge a book by its cover” doesn’t work in our image-saturated world. It’s my job to make that study look interesting enough to pick up, or to design a website that makes you want to investigate a complex topic. Once we’ve convinced a person to take that

step, my job is complete, and the Mackinac Center’s 30-plus years of research and expertise takes over.

It’s an amazing opportunity to play even a small part on a team that achieves victory after victory and to see firsthand the impact it has. Not to sing my own praises, but how many people can say their work has been by the U.S. Supreme Court?



**JONATHAN  
VANDERHOOF**

While the Mackinac Center may need me to come up with a simple way to explain a complicated problem, an easy-to-understand project can come along: Create a logo and a brand for a network where Michiganders from all walks of life can help make a difference. The logo for Opportunity Michigan needed to reflect several facets of what we aim to accomplish: a network with a profound ripple effect; an interconnected system representing

the thousands of members who join it; and a sun shining brightly over Michigan’s future. With a little creativity, the logo for Opportunity Michigan now represents all those ideas and more.

Each day, I am surrounded by a team of people who work toward a goal of a better Michigan. Now, that’s something I’ll gladly choose to be a part of. It doesn’t hurt that I even met my wife here. But I do wish I could design at least one cover with puppies on it. ■

## BY THE NUMBERS: THE DUES SKIM

**\$31,317,790.40**

Amount of money taken from Medicaid checks during the dues skim between 2004 and 2013

**\$200 million**

Amount of money annually siphoned even after the dues skim was ruled unconstitutional

**84%**

Percentage of home care givers who opted to leave the SEIU once given a choice

# Generation Z: Giving Differently



To some people, the cohort born between 1995 and 2005, known as Generation Z, is an enigma. Research shows that a stunning 55 percent of these individuals use a cell phone for 5 hours or more each day, and yet only 26 percent of 16- to 19-year-olds take the time to volunteer regularly. Therefore, it may appear that my generation is a group of self-obsessed technophiles, more concerned with social pursuits online than the greater good of the world.

The truth, though, is that many of us are simply engaging with the issues we care about in starkly different ways than our parents. My generation, largely comprised of independently minded individuals, furthers what we believe in with bold inventiveness.

Evidence suggests that Gen Z prefers using entrepreneurship as a tool for change. Instead of volunteering or giving through existing groups, many members

**JUSTIN  
WITT**

of this generation broaden the definition of traditional philanthropy to include social entrepreneurship — the practice of creating startups to generate social good. Gallup surveys indicate that nearly 80% of students in grades 5-12 want to be their own boss, and over 40% of students agree with the statement that they will invent something that changes the world. According to a study featured in “The Entrepreneur in Youth,” 64% of high school students said they want to start a nonprofit or charity.

For my part, I have launched a youth-led literacy nonprofit to strive for educational opportunity for all, something I am very passionate about. As I have watched my team grow, I can attest to my peers’ enthusiasm and dedication. This sense of self-motivation supports our desire to improve upon current humanitarian efforts through enterprise. In brief, Gen Z gives back by creating new, socially minded ventures.

On the other hand, we’re not afraid of getting involved in existing organizations. But when we do that, we have specific goals in mind. Gen Z is still willing to invest in causes by donating time and resources, or using our networks to raise awareness on social media. But most of us expect to be able to direct our support to specific initiatives within an organization. Even small donors want a say on how their contributions are used, and they want the organizations they support to be transparent about how they spend their time and money.

With this in mind, it is an exciting and challenging time for the Mackinac Center and all other charitable organizations. We should all be inspired to see how groups such as the Mackinac Center tap into the dynamic creativity of Generation Z. ■

Justin Witt is an advancement intern at the Mackinac Center.