

# IMPACT

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Students and Workers



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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

## The Most Hyperbolic Thing You'll Ever Read

In a recent column, the author begged advertisement writers to avoid superlatives and hyperbole. I chuckled, because the same admonition applies to public policy work. The Mackinac Center is all about ideas, but our ideas move through the political process, so we often see (and of course must resist) rhetorical flourishes and logical fallacies.

Here are a few I've seen.

**The "I Hope This Bill Does Awesome Things" Act.** Legislation is often described in terms of its hoped-for benefits, not what it does. When we began writing plain-language summaries of legislation in 2001, we discovered most bills can be described as "prohibiting," "restricting" or "requiring" some activity. By contrast, the formal titles of bills are often glowing and aspirational. (The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act comes to mind.) It wasn't always so: The ancient world had the 10 Commandments and the Code of Hammurabi.

**"When my team does it, it's brilliant; when yours does it, it's evil!"** Otherwise known as the process objection, this occurs when the majority party uses a legitimate tactic and the minority objects, even when it would do the same if the roles were reversed. For example: lame-duck legislators passing bills and presidents giving last-minute pardons. But incumbents retain all their powers until the day they leave office. Michael Barone dismissed this objection: "All process arguments are insincere, including this one."

**"This is the most important election of our lifetimes."** It won't surprise you that notable people repeat this line election cycle after cycle, not unlike the furniture store with its perennial "going out of business" sale. My favorite use of this came during the Bush v. Kerry election in 2004. Larry King asked George W. Bush, "Is this the most important election ever?" You can imagine the twinkle in his eye when W. said, "For me it is."

**Lies, damned lies, and statistics.** Mark Twain popularized the point that numbers are malleable. It takes discipline to ask: "What is the relevant number, and does it actually support my point?" Statistics can give the illusion of credibility and also create doubt. Consider COVID-19 metrics: We measure daily cases, daily deaths, deaths per million, 7-day averages, daily tests, infection rates, infections by industry, hospitalizations and hospital capacity. Which metric is most useful when imposing or lifting lockdown restrictions?

**"There ought to be a law."** When the Mackinac Center looked at the Michigan lawbooks in 2014, we found 3,102 criminal laws. Many of them criminalize innocuous behavior, such as dancing during the national anthem or using an orange dog collar. A criminal sanction is not always the best solution, but you know the saying: "When you have a hammer, everything looks like a nail"

As I alluded to above, no one is immune to engaging in such tactics. That's why the Mackinac Center has a Guarantee of Quality Scholarship, backed up by our editors, to hold us to a high standard of excellence. ■

By [Michael J. Reitz](#)

Michael J. Reitz is the executive vice president of the Mackinac Center.

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INTRODUCING

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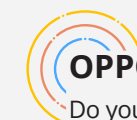
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## Center Again Ranked Among Nation's Most Influential Think Tanks

Most people are not familiar with what think tanks do, so it would probably surprise many to learn there are more 11,000 such organizations worldwide. While they come in all sorts of shapes and sizes, think tanks typically advise, educate and influence policymakers and the public on governmental policies. The latest edition of an annual report ranks the effectiveness of these organizations, and the Mackinac Center is honored to be identified, once again, as one of the most influential think tanks in the country.

The "Global Go To Think Tank Index Report" was published by the University of Pennsylvania's Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program. For more than a decade, James McGann, a senior lecturer at UPenn, has led this research, which relies on surveys of policymakers, journalists, scholars and donors to rank the best think tanks across the world.

The Mackinac Center ranked 83rd of more than 2,200 think tanks in the United States, which puts it in the top 4% nationally. The Center is also one of the highest ranked state-focused think tanks. Of the 29 Michigan-based think tanks reviewed for the report, the Center had the second-highest rank (right

behind our friends at the Acton Institute in Grand Rapids).

The report analyzed think tanks of all kinds, including university-based ones, those directly affiliated with government, ones sponsored by businesses, those with ties to political parties, and, of course, private and independent ones like the Mackinac Center. These think tanks were ranked based on the responses of nearly 4,000 think tank executives, scholars, policymakers and journalists.

The Center's high ranking is evidence of our effectiveness at influencing public policy here in Michigan. It means our recommendations and advice are well-known and well-regarded in Lansing. It means journalists take our research and point of view into consideration. It means the public can rely on the Center's research to become better informed about public policy issues.

Of course, most importantly, the Center's lofty status among think tanks means that a voice dedicated to defending free markets, limited government and the rule of law is being heard loud and clear in Michigan. That's a primary reason why our thousands

of donors choose to support our work, and we couldn't be prouder to see that effort recognized and ranked among the nation's finest public policy organizations. ■

### By Michael Van Beek

Michael Van Beek is the director of research at the Mackinac Center.

## Lawsuits Keep Michigan's Open Records Law Strong

Sunshine laws are essential tools that enable citizens to hold their government accountable. Unfortunately, it's far too common for government to try to avoid doing what the law requires: disclose its records.

Michigan's Freedom of Information Act requires a government body to respond within 5-15 days of receiving a request for information by giving a good-faith estimate of the costs and time required to fulfill the request. Once it receives a deposit, it must process the request in a reasonable time and produce the relevant records. The office may redact information, but only in a limited way.

That's the law; the actual process is significantly different. Often, government bodies estimate absurd costs to force people to abandon requests. They can also not process the request for months, rendering the documents useless. Often, the documents are heavily and improperly redacted, forcing the requestor to sue to get the requested information.

At the Mackinac Center, we file hundreds of FOIA request each year, and we have seen this pattern of noncompliance countless times. It's important to hold our government accountable, so we take legal action when it refuses to play by the rules.

In May 2020, we sought e-mails between state employees and the University of Michigan professors Gov. Gretchen Whitmer cited as experts who helped her prepare COVID-19 response plans. We did not receive the documents until October, and they were heavily redacted. The redactions were not reasonable and neither was the delay, and we sued to obtain the unredacted records.

Michigan State University was equally defiant. In June, we sought information about the firing of professor Stephen Hsu. But MSU did not release its records until after we filed suit in December. The delay was egregious because the university estimated it would only require 17 hours of work to fulfill the request. And, once again, the documents we received were heavily redacted.

In December, the Mackinac Center filed suit against the University of Michigan on behalf of the donor of an endowed gift. That donor had, in March, sought information about how his gift was being used. He did not receive all the requested records until late December, after the Center filed a lawsuit. U-M took more than 200 days to process a 7-hour request.

Universities aren't the only culprit, though. In June, we filed a FOIA request with

the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, seeking copies of complaints against businesses alleged to have violated Gov. Whitmer's COVID-related executive orders. After charging the Mackinac Center over \$1,300, LARA failed to produce the records for over five months. It was only in November, after we had filed suit, that the department produced them.

It's unfortunate these suits are necessary, given that the FOIA law is meant to encourage access to information. While many people cannot pursue lawsuits against illegal FOIA responses, the Mackinac Center is committed to holding our government accountable. If you would like to learn more about these (or future) cases, please follow along at [mackinac.org/litigation/cases](https://mackinac.org/litigation/cases). ■

### By Steve Delie

Steve Delie is the director of labor policy and Workers for Opportunity at the Mackinac Center



## Victories From Decades of Fighting Against Business Subsidies

Michigan's economy struggled through a one-state recession in the early 2000s. In response to the state's broad economic problems, lawmakers went hunting for factories and made deals: jobs for taxpayer cash. The Democratic governor and Republican Legislature didn't agree on much, but they both got behind plans to spend more on business subsidies, with legislators giving their overwhelming bipartisan support.

Things have changed since then. Advocates of business subsidies struggle to get votes for the kind of programs that used to breeze through the political process.

This is due, in part, to the Mackinac Center's work.

We demonstrated that the policies didn't do what lawmakers wanted them to accomplish. Lawmakers wanted to see more jobs, so they gave money to companies to create them. Yet the Bureau of Labor Statistics kept reporting that employment in Michigan was going down.

This was because Michigan's economic problems were deep and broad, while business subsidies were narrow and targeted. Giving costly subsidies to a particular plant for dozens of jobs does little when the economy creates and loses hundreds of thousands of jobs a year, which it does through the underappreciated churn that goes on naturally.

We attacked business subsidies on several fronts. Our careful academic analyses showed that the programs were not worth their costs. We found that deals often went bad. We did what we could to make people aware of state government's embarrassing moments, like when it awarded a deal to a con artist. We found new ways to demonstrate that these programs were ineffective at creating jobs, unfair to businesses that don't benefit from them, and expensive to the state budget. That's in addition to pointing out that it is inappropriate for the state government to pick winners and losers in the marketplace, which is what lawmakers do when they offer deals to select companies.

In short, we tried to make business subsidies unpopular.

It's been a long, hard battle. We butt heads with regional economic development agencies, business interest groups and sympathetic commentators. The people who get to hand out special favors like having that power, just as recipients of the favors like getting them.

Our success depends on creating a climate of popular opinion that is skeptical of business subsidies. This will ensure that lawmakers see costs the next time someone comes around to ask for money for jobs.

Indeed, supporters call their latest pitch to give taxpayer money to select businesses

the "Good Jobs for Michigan" program. Many lawmakers, though, see beyond the self-promoting and misleading label to find it the same kind of as unfair, ineffective and expensive program that has been tried before. The original law prevented administrators from signing new Good Jobs deals after 2019. Lawmakers have rejected calls from lobbyists to give administrators authority to approve new deals.

A reflection on this history shows that our work has helped make business subsidies less popular and more difficult to get approved through the legislative process. This is remarkable progress, and we hope to continue it. ■

**By James M. Hohman**

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



## How the Mackinac Center's National Footprint is Making a Difference for Students and Workers

The Mackinac Center's Workers for Opportunity initiative has become an increasingly recognizable force when it comes to state-based labor reforms. Thanks in part to our leadership, lawmakers from at least eight states are taking actions that would either extend right-to-work liberties or further protect public employees' right to make informed choices on union membership. When most legislative sessions close in May or June, it's possible we will see over 1 million workers' rights expanded.

This work builds on our long-term success here at home. Ever since right-to-work took effect in Michigan in 2013, over 33% of teachers (to pick one occupation) have become more informed of their rights and chosen to withdraw from union membership. In our conversations with lawmakers across the country, we find that Michigan is still an example for demonstrating the importance of ensuring that employees are not only free to exercise their rights, but have the power to do so.

The Mackinac Center's impact beyond the state's borders is not confined to the workplace, however. We recently launched a multistate strategy to work alongside others to advance proposals that help parents work together in response to the widespread closures of in-person classroom

learning. Many students have suffered from inadequate virtual education programs offered by public schools, and parents want to respond. Many have come together in small community settings so their children could safely benefit from socialization and customized education approaches that meet their specific needs. Called "pod learning," this approach lets parents share the responsibilities of financing and arranging educational programming, making it a much more feasible and affordable option for two-parent working families than going it alone.

State policymakers have sought the input of organizations like the Mackinac Center as they seek to reform state laws in ways that will empower parents interested in pursuing pod learning opportunities for their children. A number of barriers and legal threats to pod learning arrangements exist, including the inability of parents to use a portion of their children's per-pupil funding toward expenses they incur. These barriers limit the number of families who can pursue pod learning.

Currently, we are working with allied organizations and lawmakers in Michigan and in three other states to explore opportunities to remove these barriers and secure the pod-learning option for parents.

As we approach the end of another school year marked by COVID-driven policies, the Mackinac Center is raising the banner for more parental choices and fewer government restrictions on how our students can learn and thrive. And in doing so, we believe the cause is too important not to look outward for opportunities to bring these options to families around the country. ■

**By Lindsay Killen**

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



## Andrew B. Gillman:

Translator, entrepreneur and free-market supporter

By Lorie Shane

*(Editor's Note: Andrew B. Gillman, a longtime Mackinac Center supporter and Legacy Society member who lives in Ypsilanti, shares his thoughts on the challenges facing Michigan.)*

### Q. Tell us about your background and career.

I was born and raised in Michigan and graduated from the University of Michigan in 1989 with a bachelor's degree, with a focus on Asian studies. After graduation, I worked for a while in Japan, where I could refine my Japanese reading and speaking skills.

Returning to Michigan, I started my own company as a translator and interpreter. For a time, I hired and dispatched other translators and interpreters, but I found that the various regulatory requirements diverted too much of my time.

I now serve as a solo bicultural consultant to the automotive industry; my primary client is Toyota Motors North America R&D. This involves not only translating technical and engineering materials, but also developing executive presentations to meet the needs of a multicultural workplace.

I also serve as the president of the Hinoki Foundation, an all-volunteer nonprofit that promotes Japanese-English bilingualism among schoolchildren. With my wife, also a native of Michigan, I have raised my children to speak Japanese. They are two of only a handful of

students with no Japanese ancestry among the 1,000 or so students at the Japanese School of Detroit.

### Q. How did you come to your free market beliefs?

Home life and childhood entrepreneurialism primed me to support free markets and limited government, which is just another way of saying "freedom from others."

I have worked in one form or another since I was 11, when I got up at 4:30 a.m. each day to deliver the Detroit

Free Press. This formed in me, at an early age, a sense of responsibility and contributing to society. Every morning, I walked or biked five miles or so, where my only companions were my dog, Snoopy, and an occasional police car on patrol.

Sadly, this type of business experience for youth is rare today. My four brothers and I also made various crafts and goods that we sold to neighborhood kids. All of us ended up being self-employed as adults.

My formal education in the value of markets probably started when my older brother Steve, now

deceased, introduced me to books like "The Incredible Bread Machine." The principles it describes seem so obvious and sensible now but were a revelation at the time.

Government growth has the effect of not only taking resources, but also stifling their creation. There are empty buildings in my town that an entrepreneur, in the past, could have turned into a business overnight. Now, zoning rules, licensing, labor-related mandates, and sundry fees set high and often insurmountable hurdles to entry.



*Andy Gillman and his wife, Anne Hooghart, are shown here with their daughters Kasey Gillman, 15, left, and Cassidy Gillman, 13, at the Itsukushima Shrine near Hiroshima, Japan. The shrine is located on Itsukushima, an island commonly known as Miyajima.*

**Q. What do you see as the biggest challenge we face in Michigan?**

Education worries me the most. People act on their ideas, and my sense is that schools now focus less on basic civics, history and economics. And many students, especially children who are Black, Indigenous or people of color, are denied higher-quality education due to the outmoded and anti-competitive manner in which education is provided.

These populations overwhelmingly want greater school choice, in the form of charter public schools or vouchers for private schools, so that they, too, can build a strong academic foundation. The COVID situation has only shown how vested interests oppose change.

**Q. What led you to support the Mackinac Center and join Legacy Society?**

I chose to support the Mackinac Center because it avoids hyperbole and is willing to publicly recognize

positive acts by people anywhere on the political spectrum. I particularly appreciate its work in the area of education — the databases it creates and maintains and its analysis of education policy.

I am also glad for its role as a watchdog over legislation; as government becomes more complex, the average person cannot keep up with all the shenanigans. I am not certain that free markets and limited government will prevail, but I know that a core of people educated in these ideas is the precondition to keeping the United States prosperous and its people free.

This is why I included the Mackinac Center in my estate plan. We all have benefited from the work of those who came before, and I feel a duty to share that benefit with the future. The work of the Mackinac Center will safeguard the principles that make prosperity possible and is a bulwark against many of the destructive philosophies of today. ■

————— *How to join the* —————

MACKINAC CENTER  
**LEGACY SOCIETY**

An old adage says, "The shade we enjoy today comes from trees planted by others long ago." This simple yet insightful passage speaks to the impact of acting today to preserve the ideals and institutions that will benefit future generations.

When you make a gift to the Mackinac Center through your will or estate plan, you automatically become a member of the Mackinac Center Legacy Society and help ensure that there is a strong, clear voice to speak for free enterprise and individual liberty for years to come.

There are many ways to make a legacy gift to the Mackinac Center, including your will, living trust, charitable gift annuity, life insurance policy or endowment.

Our Legacy donors receive special benefits, including:

- Special seating at Mackinac Center events
- Being honored at a special dinner each year
- A special thank-you delivery during the holiday season

But the main benefit is the peace of mind that comes from knowing that your hard-earned assets will be used in support of the values you cherished during your lifetime — liberty, self-reliance and limited, accountable government.

If you have any questions about joining Legacy Society, please don't hesitate to contact Lorie Shane, senior director of advancement, at **989-698-1909** or **shane@mackinac.org**.



# Temporary Pandemic Reforms Should be Made Permanent

The discovery and spread of COVID-19 shined a new light on many old problems — in particular, the laws and regulations standing in the way of treating and caring for patients.

Early in the pandemic, the Mackinac Center recommended fully suspending several of the laws as a way to increase access to qualified providers, increase hospital bed capacity, and bring the emergency under control. Gov. Gretchen Whitmer adopted many of our suggestions. Unfortunately, all of them have been reinstated, despite Gov. Whitmer acknowledging the suspension helped “save countless lives and ensured our hospitals were fully staffed to care for COVID-19 patients.”

If these laws can be suspended to improve patient outcomes and save lives during an emergency, they should be permanently suspended.

Increasing the number of providers to treat patients and using their competencies to the greatest extent are a must during a pandemic. To do so, Gov. Whitmer suspended scope-of-practice restrictions on nurse practitioners, physician assistants, pharmacists and others that prevented them from fully using their education, experience and training. These restrictions, such as the requirement for nurse practitioners to have written collaborative practice agreements with physicians, contribute to primary care shortages by limiting access to essential providers. They also increase costs, wait times, and driving distances for patients.

Patients benefit when providers have full practice authority. Research has found no significant health differences and comparable patient outcomes between patients randomly assigned to either nurse practitioners or physicians, when NPs had the same authority and responsibilities as physicians. Research has also found that patients were more satisfied with NP consultations.

Another method to address shortages and increase access to providers is to recognize the licenses of highly trained health professionals from other states. In response to the increased need of providers during the initial surge of COVID-19, Gov. Whitmer suspended licensing restrictions that prevented professionals from other states with licenses in good standing from treating Michiganders without first paying for a Michigan license.

Those concerned about quality issues can rest assured, as the requirements for obtaining a state license in most health care professions are largely the same from state to state. Additionally, if this temporary reform were made permanent, health professionals would still be required to follow all Michigan laws, practice only within their scope, and register with the state. The federal Department of Veterans Affairs sets an example; it accepts individuals with a license in good standing to practice in any of its facilities, regardless of where they are licensed.

Adequate bed capacity is another requirement during a health emergency. Since Michigan health facilities are currently required to obtain a certificate of need, or CON, to add additional beds, Gov. Whitmer issued several executive orders that expedited the process to add bed capacity to treat COVID-19 patients. The state approved over 100 emergency CONs for facilities.

CON laws were initially enacted to control health care costs, but decades of research has found the opposite result. Because of how they are constructed, CON laws protect current providers from competition and are associated with reduced access to care, decreased health care quality and higher costs. George Mason University’s Mercatus Center found that eliminating our state’s CON laws would increase the number of health care facilities here and reduce total health care spending. For comparison, 12 states have no CON laws, and more than 20 states have fewer CON regulations than Michigan, including all surrounding Midwestern states.

For decades, these laws and regulations have stood in the way of putting patients first and have acted as buffers to adding natural competitive forces (and their benefits) into the health care market. The governor has maintained she would welcome “ideas on science-based solutions to protect public health.” In that spirit, we recommend making these temporary responses permanent, which will help our state respond to future emergencies and provide more access to affordable care under normal circumstances. ■

**By Greg George**

Greg George is the director of legislative affairs at the Mackinac Center.





MEET A SUPPORTER

# Helping Freedom's Advocates Become Persuasive Communicators

A profile of Eric Tubbs

## Mackinac in the Media

At the end of each year, MichiganVotes, a project of the Mackinac Center, tallies the number of votes lawmakers missed that year. With some lawmakers needing to quarantine and others becoming sick with COVID-19, there were some understandable reasons for missed votes. Still, the report of missed votes is yet another tool to hold lawmakers accountable. Outlets that featured this year's report include the Midland Daily News, The Alpena News, Grand Rapids Business Journal, The Monroe News, WSJM and the Sanilac County News.

Celebrating National School Choice Week looked different this year, but the Mackinac Center still featured families who have used a variety of educational options. In an op-ed in The Detroit News, Ben DeGrow shared stories from three families. He wrote, "Those who use school choice to match their child's needs to an educational setting that works for them receive tangible benefits." One high-profile advocate for school choice was former Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos. DeGrow wrote a piece for Real Clear Education that discussed her legacy and efforts to give students greater educational opportunities.

Higher excise taxes for cigarettes and vaping devices have been under discussion in several states. Unfortunately, attempts to use tax increases to curb smoking are misguided and will lead to even more smuggling, a point made in several op-eds written by Michael LaFaive and adjunct scholar Todd Nesbit. These pieces appeared in The Washington Post, The Hill and the Duluth News Tribune.

Other outlets in Minnesota, Indiana and Illinois have mentioned Mackinac Center data in their reporting.

As James Hohman noted in The Hill, the minimum wage debate has been caught in an endless loop. In a separate piece for that outlet, Jarrett Skorup argued multiple points against raising the federal minimum wage. Another op-ed written by Skorup was published in National Review. He cautioned there that a higher minimum wage "will not lift many people out of poverty but instead will make fewer jobs available to the unemployed and those looking for their first jobs."

Over a decade's worth of misguided green energy policies wreaked havoc in Texas and the lower Midwest as states suffered blackouts during some unusually severe winter weather. Jason Hayes described what these blackouts show us about the future of energy in the U.S., in a piece published by USA Today. In the piece, he wrote, "As more states mandate unreliable renewables, incidents like this will become more frequent, not less. Every new wind turbine and solar panel means less reliable energy — the energy Americans need to weather the coldest nights and the hottest days." On radio and TV shows across Michigan, Hayes discussed what the state can do to avoid a similar fate. ■

When asked how he first learned about the Mackinac Center, Eric Tubbs paused. "I am sure it had to do with Larry Reed, who was one of my economics instructors when I attended Northwood University. When I first started supporting the Mackinac Center, I had three young children and was trying to build the business. We didn't really have money to give away, but I tried to make small donations every year because I thought the work was important for the future of my kids."

Since then, Tubbs has been no stranger to the cause of liberty. He is the president of Iron Light Labs, a nonprofit dedicated to training people, especially in the freedom movement, in effective communications. Before that, he co-owned and managed Tubbs Brothers, an automotive retailer. In 2016, he sold his shares to his brother to pursue his passion for helping others understand the benefits of free-market principles.

"Free markets and individual liberty," he says, "are the greatest forces for good in human history. They've lifted millions out of poverty. Yet too often, these ideas go unheard, or worse, misrepresented in mainstream culture by those who disagree with them. Proponents of freedom and individual responsibility have been losing the battle for the hearts and minds of individuals, especially those in the political middle and soft left."

He continues, "Freedom-focused organizations have mastered rigorous

research, econometric modelling and budget analysis, but few have the capacity or skills to build up the marketing capabilities needed to catapult their ideas into mainstream culture. For the ideas of liberty and freedom to prevail in culture, organizations promoting these values need to dramatically improve in reaching and persuading broader audiences. The Mackinac Center has come a long way in this regard."

Tubbs and his wife take a focused approach to philanthropy. "Penny and I are passionate about the value of individual liberty, and most of our giving goes to organizations we believe will further that cause, because if we lose our freedom, we lose everything." He adds, "Frankly, I have never understood why some people who support freedom-centered organizations give ten times as much to their public university that is taxpayer supported and often working against the principles of liberty. But, we all get to choose!"

The one message he would like to share with Mackinac Center donors is to stay focused on the big picture. "We often want to see policies changed quickly,



but the reality is that it is a marathon, not a sprint. I often think of the years of foundational work Mackinac did on right-to-work with no apparent progress. I am convinced that had Mackinac not done all of that work upfront, when the opportunity for right-to-work arose in Michigan, we would have missed it. We need to continue to support the Mackinac Center and other organizations that effectively promote liberty and limited government." ■



*Holly Wetzel*  
Communications Manager



# The Family Man

## A profile of the Mackinac Center's Jim Walker

He was almost a priest.

It's strange to think about now. Now that Jim Walker is happily married with six kids.

Growing up in Oxford, Michigan — then a one-traffic light town — Jim is from a devout family. One that knew tragedy.

When he was five, his fourth-eldest sister passed away from a rare lung disease. His brother was diagnosed as well, spending years being fed by a tube and sleeping in an oxygen tank, and doctors said he would die as well. But he didn't. Walker, assisting as his caretaker, saw it all up-close from a young age.

Learning to accept suffering peacefully was, in part, what prompted him to consider a call to the priesthood. The son of a football coach, he went to Hope College to play defensive back and study physics. Injuries, student loans and a maturing faith prompted him to transfer to a seminary.

God had other plans, however. And so did the young woman who would become his wife.

"Kelly and I were raised in the same small town. Our older siblings married each other. We dated when I was at Hope," he said. "After I left seminary, we started dating again, got engaged, and decided to serve the church another way."

During the engagement, the two became missionaries; he was stationed in Dallas, and she went to Atlanta.

"That's how I first started working with donors," Walker said. "We needed money for a project, and I was able to secure a few commitments from people who wanted to help." A few years later, he was asked to run a school near Dallas, as its chief executive.

From there, he served a variety of religious, cultural and civic institutions.

"My job is to connect people of means to people with needs. To amplify the voice of donors who make game-changing investments," he said.

In 2015, the ex-athlete came to the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, where he is now the vice president for advancement. He says it's a special place because of its mission and leadership, and the team he's privileged to lead, with its diverse sets of skills and abilities.

"Policy changes have ability to affect millions of lives almost instantaneously, but the changes often take years to achieve," he said. "The state's right-to-work law, our win at the Michigan Supreme Court (in a case concerning Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's executive orders), all of the victories — they don't happen without our donors investing in ideas and doing so for the long run. They're not only generous but persevering."

Walker loves his job because, as he says, "generous people are happy people. Our donors give freely to make the world, and Michigan in particular, a better place for all people. The main return on their investment is knowing they've done something to help others."

Above all, he is a family man. He learned to prioritize family from the example of his own parents. He has five living siblings, and his mom is expecting grandchild number 27 soon.

"And we all get together almost every Sunday. When my dad was living, he referred to it as a piece of heaven." ■

# Postal Delays Didn't Deter Giving

*"With 1920 postmark, mail is delivered to  
Michigan home 100 years late."*

— *Washington Post*

While most of us won't ever experience such a severe mail delay, over the past year all of us have sent mail that arrived far later than we expected. That's what happened to the Mackinac Center's final letter of 2020, mailed to supporters on Dec. 11. A number of you told us that you did not receive it until mid-January; others received it in February.

The New York Times recently reported that in December, the U.S. Postal Service turned in its worst performance in years, with only 64% of first-class mail delivered on time around Christmas. The reasons aren't surprising: postal workers affected by COVID-19, the holiday mail rush and increased demand for parcel deliveries.

But what's so encouraging to us is that the late delivery didn't stop supporters like you from giving.

The number of gifts made to the Mackinac Center in 2020 was about 35% higher than it was in 2019, this included support from hundreds of new donors.

Gifts poured in through the mail as well as through stock transfers, direct deposit, monthly credit card giving and online giving at [www.mackinac.org/donate](http://www.mackinac.org/donate).

Whatever your preferred giving method, we're truly grateful.

Because of you, we advanced the cause of freedom and limited government even during an unforeseen pandemic. Your gifts fueled policy reforms like deregulating telemedicine and making it easier for ex-offenders to obtain productive work. And you contributed to our landmark victory at the Michigan Supreme Court over Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's abuse of power.

As you know, there is much more to do to restore our freedoms and restart our economy in 2021. Your continued support is vital. Mail will continue to be an important and effective way for the Mackinac Center to communicate with you, but there are many other ways for us to stay in touch, including online and through email. Please don't hesitate to contact our Advancement Department at 989-631-0900 if you would ever like to talk about your mail, email or giving preferences. We look forward to talking with you. ■