

IMPACT

How The Pandemic Exposed The Need For School Choice

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A stylized rainbow logo consisting of three concentric, semi-circular arcs. The top arc is yellow, the middle is orange, and the bottom is white. Each arc is composed of several segments, with small dots at the ends of the segments.

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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

Gaining Victory Through Having a Clear Field of Vision

“We are drowning in information while starving for wisdom,” the scientist E.O. Wilson has observed. Newspapers, radio, television, magazines, email, social media platforms, podcasts, text messages, the list goes on. Humans create more information than any person could ever hope to consume. Just one data point: YouTube users upload 500 hours of video every minute.

No wonder writer Martin Gurri says we face a “digital tsunami.”

People who support the Mackinac Center care about the future of the United States and feel a laudable obligation to stay abreast of major political and policy developments.

But consider the tsunami of government actions one could try to track: legislation, statutes, mandates, regulations, advisories, executive orders, court opinions, etc. Multiply these by the number of governmental entities: cities, school districts, counties, taxing districts, state and federal agencies and more.

It might be possible to tune out the digital tsunami to some extent, but there’s no such luxury with government edicts. They carry the force of law, with serious consequences for one’s person, property or business — to say nothing about the trajectory of the country and our freedoms.

How does one keep up or discern what’s important?

I suspect this is one of the reasons you follow and support the Mackinac Center’s work. We picture our role as a lighthouse: We seek to highlight critical facts, helping people navigate a sea of information.

While we review every bill in the Michigan Legislature — nearly 2,500 bills annually — we do not chase every passing car. We prefer to focus on opportunities for strategic wins and long-lasting effects.

For example, when Gov. Gretchen Whitmer announced her intent to ignore the

Legislature’s role during a state of emergency, we recognized an irrevocable shift in the balance of power under the Michigan Constitution. Yes, we were also concerned about the content of her emergency orders and their consequences for Michigan society. But the greater danger was having a governor who could arrogate power with few limitations. (Gov. Whitmer confirmed this fear by stating she would have used the Emergency Powers of Governor Act to suspend a state requirement that schools help students reach a certain level of proficiency in reading in the third grade.)

The Mackinac Center’s policy experts and strategic thinkers ask several questions when we select issues and priorities for our work:

- Is this a viable idea, or will it take time to develop?
- Does it significantly increase economic opportunity?
- Do we have expertise in this area?
- Does it affect personal liberty?
- Does it change the structure of limitations on government?
- Does it expand or constrict the footprint of government?
- Are we on offense or just playing defense?
- Can we demonstrate how this policy will help or hurt people?
- If the Mackinac Center doesn’t do this, who will?

To paraphrase management guru Peter Drucker, leadership includes doing things well and, more importantly, picking the right priorities. ■

By Michael J. Reitz

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

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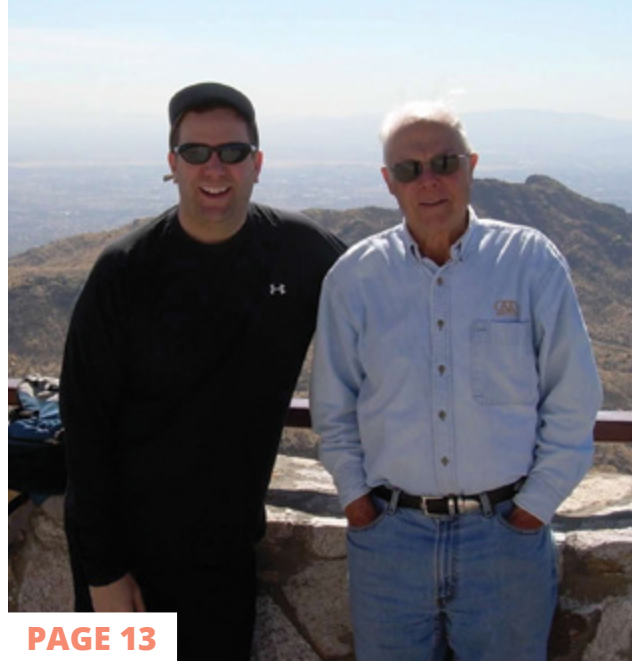
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MichCapCon.com



Lessons For America From Venezuela

In the 1950s, Venezuela was one of the five wealthiest countries in the world. Buoyed by large oil reserves, it remained among the most prosperous countries in South America for decades after.

Today, 90% of the population is in poverty, with average earnings of about \$6 per month. The currency is almost worthless, subjected to hyperinflation since 2015. And 4 million citizens have fled.

How did this happen? Could similar events happen in the United States? Those questions were the subject of recent Mackinac Center events featuring Jorge Galicia, a Venezuelan expatriate and activist.

When Galicia was born in the 1990s, Venezuela was still doing well, though its economic foundation was shaky. The oil industry had been partly nationalized, and the country saw spurts of inflation. On measures of economic freedom, it was in the middle of the pack for the continent.

And then in the late 1990s, Hugo Chavez seized power.

“Chavez got into office by demonizing the rich and promising to seize their assets and give it to the poor to make their lives better,” said Galicia. “This is a [short-term] solution with bad [long-term] results.” He added that he has seen attempts to do the same here in the United States.

Chavez increased the government’s grip on the oil industry and nationalized other industries and major corporations. For a few years, this allowed him to

increase government spending and aid to the poor. But foreign investment fled. Trade tumbled and people had less incentive to work. Jobs dried up.

“Still, Chavez tried to keep spending money,” Galicia said. This led to runaway inflation, which continued even after Chavez’s death in 2013.

Galicia, once involved in protests against the regime, fled to the United States, where he is seeking asylum.

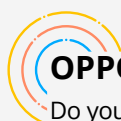
He’s pessimistic that things will turn around anytime soon in Venezuela. “People are very reliant on the government,” Galicia said. But he hopes it isn’t too late for America. Unlike Venezuela, the U.S. has strong private property rights, gun rights and resistance to government spending.

Galicia did a speaking tour around Michigan – at Northwood University in Midland, Spring Arbor University and in Birmingham.

The crowd in Midland was very receptive to the message. Several local residents who are immigrants from socialist countries attended the lecture in person or online and got a chance to ask questions. They came from Venezuela, Colombia, China and Bulgaria. If you didn’t get a chance to tune in and want to watch the talk, you can do so by clicking on that event at www.Mackinac.org/Events.

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How The Pandemic Exposed The Need For School Choice



TWO DECADES AGO, supporters of education choice tried to lift desperate students out of failing schools by dismantling a constitutional barrier to opportunity. Michigan voters dashed their hopes. But the obstacle looks more vulnerable than it ever has, thanks to the lingering challenges associated with COVID schooling.

The pandemic disrupted school routines, caused many students to drop even further behind in their learning and left many parents steeped in frustration. Children with disabilities or from disadvantaged communities suffered the most. Many families, but theirs especially, felt the need for choices and alternatives.

COVID revealed the shortcomings of a rigid, bureaucratic K-12 education system. Many families had exercised one of the most basic and overlooked forms of choice, taking on a new mortgage in a desirable district. What they found, however, were officials who disregarded their children's academic or emotional needs, or disrespected their values.

One school year marred by disruptions was followed by a second, leading to further dissatisfaction. In 18 states, lawmakers responded by introducing or expanding programs that fund students rather than systems. They entrusted an increasing number of parents with more power to make important educational decisions. The move toward education freedom is not only a popular strategy, but it's also proved to be effective in states that were early adopters.

Two of Michigan's neighbors, Ohio and Indiana, expanded the options families have. Even more notably, West Virginia went from having almost zero school choice to approving state-funded flexible education spending accounts for families of nearly all students.

What advantage did those states (and others) have that helped them seize the moment? Having political leaders sympathetic to education choice was an important factor. In Michigan, though, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer has used her veto pen, proving herself loyal to interest groups more invested in protecting district and employee turf than in giving families new options.

Yet even more crucial in separating Michigan from other states was a legal breakthrough from 2020. In the height of the pandemic, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down laws in more than 30 states that opponents of education choice have used to block new programs from taking

effect. The 5-4 majority ruled in *Espinoza v. Montana* that these 19th-century Blaine amendments, rooted in anti-Catholic bigotry, could not deny families their right to use state scholarship programs for religious education.

Michigan's "anti-parochial" amendment is more recent, passed by state voters in 1970 to prevent taxpayer funds from supporting private religious schools. One of the few anti-aid laws left after the *Espinoza* decision, it has been an especially painful thorn in the side of parents desperately seeking safe, stable in-person learning options for their children.

The Mackinac Center has joined a number of aggrieved parents to file a federal suit that strikes at the heart of our state's restrictive constitutional amendment. Our Legal Foundation, working with Bursch Law, makes a strong case that the 1970 provision was born out of anti-Catholic bigotry.

As the complaint shows, the amendment continues to discriminate. A 2017 change in federal law allows 529 college savings plans to pay for K-12 tuition. But in this state, families face a state tax penalty if they use their Michigan 529 plan at a private religious school. The penalty doesn't apply, however, if they send the same funds to one of a handful of exclusive public school districts that charge tuition to nonresidents.

The process of resolving a federal constitutional court case takes time. In the meantime, many students and families need relief. The Legislature stepped in recently to create Student Opportunity Scholarships. The large pool of state tax credits would benefit private donations to K-12 scholarships that primarily benefit low- and middle-income families, who could use the funds on tuition, tutoring, online curriculum, special-needs therapies and skilled trades programs. Thousands of students in both public and private schools could benefit.

Unfortunately, Gov. Whitmer took the predictable path and nixed the student aid program that passed both the House and Senate. While parents may be disappointed, their hopes are not dashed. A group has formed to turn the issue into citizen-initiated legislation, keeping the issue alive into 2022.

By Ben DeGrow

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

Five Families Seek Better Opportunities, Challenge Michigan's Bigoted Blaine Amendment

Taking down Michigan's bigoted Blaine Amendment is a tough challenge. Through it all, the Mackinac Center Legal Foundation is proud and honored to represent five families who are looking to change Michigan for the better. While each story is unique, all are supported by a common theme – families who want to provide their children with the best education possible face an obstacle erected in state law.

Located in Kalamazoo, the Hile family quickly noticed during the COVID pandemic that virtual learning was not a good match for their bubbly and energetic kindergartner. After all, kindergarten should be a time for children to learn how school works, how to sit at a desk, hold a pencil and socialize with classmates. The Hiles were able to move their daughter to a local Christian school, but with some sacrifices: the cost of tuition, as well as some future support she would otherwise receive from the Kalamazoo Promise scholarship fund.

The Leitch family of Charlotte also realized that their local public school was not the best option for their children, though it happened years before the pandemic. They, too, have very energetic children, and they felt they were not benefitting from the public school system. When the pandemic forced a switch to virtual learning, the family began to look for other options. They moved to a private Christian school for the 2021-22 year, but with three children, the costs are significant.

The Lupanoff family of Grand Rapids were proud supporters of their local public school. Having sent one adult son through

the system already, they are parents to daughters, both in high school. As time passed, the girls began to grow uncomfortable with the curriculum, and the family looked for other options. A local Christian school welcomed both daughters, but once again, tuition is an expensive and real obstacle.

For the Jacokes family, their satisfaction with their son's high school quickly declined during the COVID pandemic. After some searching, they found a private school that would meet their needs, but they now have to budget around tuition payments.

Most of the five client families were able to place their children in a school that better fits their needs, at a great financial cost to themselves. But not all of them can afford to do so. The Bagos family of Royal Oak, for instance has been forced to keep twin boys in a school that isn't a good match. With their finances restricted by a recent move into the district they thought would be right for them, they can not afford to pay tuition to the local private school. But they cannot afford to move out of the district, either, leading to them feeling trapped, like they were being held hostage by the school itself.

Each of these families has been restricted in some way by Michigan's antiquated Blaine Amendment. We hope to be able to provide them, and the rest of Michigan's parents, a positive outcome in the months and years to come. You can learn more about the Mackinac Center's case, including in-depth profiles on each of the families at mackinac.org/kids. ■

11/3/1970

Date Michigan prohibits taxpayer support of private and religious schools by a 57-43 vote.

6.7%

The proportion of students in private and religious schools.

31

Number of states whose prohibition of taxpayer support of private and religious schools has been struck down by courts.

529

The section in the U.S tax code that allows state-sponsored education plans, which, by Michigan's 1970 prohibition, cannot be spent on private and religious schools.



With Mackinac Center Help, Florida Set To Lead On Stopping Union Coercion

For decades, Florida has demonstrated a commitment to protecting workers from union coercion. But in 2022, the Mackinac Center will be equipping the state's leading policymakers with the ammunition needed to become the gold standard for worker freedom.

Florida has long ensured that workers, whether in the private sector or the public one, cannot be fired for withdrawing from a union. That's a protection enshrined in the Florida Constitution by a right-to-work provision. In recent years, the state went a step further by requiring teachers unions to stand for reelection, or "recertification," to maintain their monopoly representation if their membership drops below 50% in a bargaining unit.

Yet Florida legislators understand that even these protections are not enough to fully recognize and implement the First Amendment rights of public employees in their state.

Last year, Florida came very close to enacting reforms that would get

them there. In 2022, lawmakers in the Sunshine State are committed to crossing the finish line. If they do, it will be with the support of the Mackinac Center's national Workers for Opportunity initiative and in close partnership with The James Madison Institute, Americans for Prosperity and other coalition allies.

Lawmakers are considering reforms that would do the following:

- Ensure good bookkeeping by requiring that public employees were informed of their First Amendment rights to refrain from union membership before agreeing to pay the union
- Require employers to obtain consent directly from their employees before withholding union dues money from paychecks
- Require public employees to be given regular, periodic opportunities to reassess their union membership options and make a fresh decision

- Strengthen the state's union recertification law so that, rather than being narrowly restricted to teachers and instructional personnel, it would extend to other public sector employees as well
- Bolster accountability mechanisms for the recertification process so that it is more transparent and the results of its union elections can be more accurately verified

As Florida's lawmakers revisit these efforts with renewed vigor in 2022, they will show liberty-minded state lawmakers and administrations elsewhere what leadership on worker freedom looks like. ■

**By Sal Nuzzo and
Rep. Cord Byrd**

Sal Nuzzo is the vice president of policy and directory of the center for economic prosperity at The James Madison Institute in Florida. Rep. Byrd is a representative in the 11th District of the Florida House of Representatives.



Developing a Coalition To End Corporate Welfare

States across the country offer select businesses taxpayer cash and other special treatment, and they do this because they feel they need to compete with other states that also offer favors. This is not how states should compete with each other, and they should make an agreement with each other to stop their select business subsidy programs. That's why we've written a disarmament treaty and are teaming up with groups across the ideological spectrum to stop these deals.

Our oldest ally on the issue is a progressive lobbyist out of Chicago, Dan Johnson. He got inspired to work on this issue after the Chicago Board of Exchange demanded special favors from the state legislature and got them. Johnson didn't like that ultimatum or the politics around it. So he started working with lawmakers around the country to introduce legislation that would end them.

He saw the compact we had written and reached out to us. We've been working to get more support from legislators and groups across the aisle to advance

the issue. We reached out to our sister think tanks in the State Policy Network to support the legislation, and it's been an easy sell for most of them. Some national groups have supported the compact, as well.

When the idea gets translated into legislation, it's usually been advocated by Democrats, but there has been bipartisan support. In Michigan, two Republicans (Rep. Steven Johnson and Sen. Aric Nesbitt) and two Democrats (Sen. Jim Ananich and Rep. Yousef Rabhi) have introduced bills. And more support will come as we get more people engaged in the issue.

Often, cross-ideological allies like the same policy for different reasons. On housing restrictions, for instance, some people on the left may not like restrictive zoning because it stops low income housing, while some on the right don't like restrictions on property rights. Yet on business subsidies, both sides disapprove for the same reason: They don't think that states should be competing over who can offer the most expensive deal to companies.

Both would prefer that states compete over business climate and quality-of-life issues.

Right now, the supporters of selective business favors tend to be those who are likely receive favors and the state and local government agencies that hand them out. And they've been successful in getting states to create business subsidy programs. The interstate compact to end these programs is both a rallying point to gather a broad coalition and a solution that can end favoritism. It's been good to start this process with people across the ideological spectrum. ■

By James M. Hohman

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



Getting Wired

New report shows local governments how to expand internet access

Across Michigan, cities big and small have looked for ways to help their residents get access to high-speed internet service. Unfortunately, too many are going about it the wrong way.

Traverse City. Holland. Marquette. Farmington and Farmington Hills. Each has explored a government owned or run system for expanding broadband internet and related services. Some have stepped back. Others, like Traverse City, have pushed forward despite rising costs and missed projections.

Government-run internet systems are a bad idea. Around the country, nearly all of them miss their projections for how many people will sign up, and they lose money. Many end up going bankrupt. Provo, Utah, for example, spent \$39 million before selling its system to Google for a dollar, and the state of Kentucky spent at least \$1.5 billion on what's been called an "information highway to nowhere."

In Michigan, some residents don't have good service. And others don't have many companies to choose from. Is there anything the state of Michigan and local governments do about it?

That's what the Mackinac Center seeks to lay out in our new report, "A Broadband Toolkit For Local Governments: How Michigan Cities Should Expand Access to High-Speed Internet."

The toolkit discusses five things local government officials should do for their citizens.

Clear away needless local regulations

These cover access to telephone poles and public rights-of-way, as well as drawing on new FCC rules to empower citizens to use their own property for services.

Foster competition among private providers

Let's use the private sector and competitive bidding to get internet service to areas where it isn't.

Lower barriers to additional private investment

Taxes and government fees on equipment can mean that companies will not find it financially attractive to expand service.

Resist a one-size-fits-all technological solution

What we want is more access to high-speed internet. But there are many ways to achieve that, including wires laid to the home, 5G signals and service through cell phones. Local governments should be flexible in what they consider.

Provide vouchers rather than costly and risky government-owned networks

If, after doing all the above, a government finds there are still people who can't access service, it should explore vouchers for the low-income, or the elderly, or residents with no options. This is preferable to a duplicative government-owned network.

With this report, citizens can ask their local governments what they are doing, and elected officials can better understand their options. With billions of dollars set to pour into Michigan to expand broadband internet access, these guidelines to prevent government waste are needed more than ever.

By Jarrett Skorup

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



Mackinac in the Media



Holly Wetzel

Communications Manager

This past year, the Mackinac Center has frequently acted against government bureaucracies and public universities that are not being transparent and open. Most notably, we sued the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services after it refused to release information about COVID-19 deaths in long-term care facilities. But Michigan isn't the only state that has not given a clear picture of its COVID deaths. When Kathy Hochul became governor of New York, she revealed that the state had undercounted COVID deaths by 12,000 people. As Steve Delie and Peter Warren wrote in a Wall Street Journal op-ed, "It is deeply concerning that more than a year and a half into the pandemic, people are being asked to trust their leaders without being able to verify their claims. What's even more worrisome is those leaders' willingness to ignore or slow-walk freedom-of-information requests."

As more school districts announced that they would start the 2020-21 school year virtually, some families wanted to use other options. Unfortunately, an amendment in the Michigan Constitution makes it challenging for them to do so. Five families, represented by the Mackinac Center Legal Foundation, are fighting back. The lawsuit, which you can read more about on page 8, has received national and local attention. It even caught the attention of former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, who wrote about the families in a Real Clear Education essay. Bush wrote, "If we've learned one thing from the pandemic, it's that our education system must be flexible and centered around students. A single, one-

size-fits-all pathway for every kid will never deliver great results."

The fight against corporate welfare continues, made necessary by new legislation in Lansing that would spend hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars. Rather than give money to a select few companies, the state should encourage business development through other means, such as regulatory changes that will lower electricity rates. Two Mackinac Center experts, Michael LaFaive and Jason Hayes, offered solutions to attract businesses in an op-ed in Crain's Detroit. They wrote, "The best approach to economic development is one of a fair field and no favors. Reduce utility and tax costs across the board, provide first-rate public infrastructure and lighten the regulatory load." Prevailing wage, a bad policy that was repealed by the Legislature in 2018, was recently reinstated by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer for some state contracts. Jarrett Skorup wrote about the problems and hypocrisy of this decision in The Detroit News. ■

DONOR PROFILE

Three Lucky People



Steve Thomas and Jim Rodney



Michael D. LaFaive and Jim Rodney

Our longtime friend and mentor, Jim Rodney, passed away in August at the age of 98. We were privileged to know him these last 25 years, thanks to our work and mutual interest in free markets and free people. The depth of this gentleman's impact on us (and others) is hard to overstate.

Jim was a board member with the Mackinac Center, starting in 1993, and he and fiscal policy expert Mike LaFaive hit it off quickly, sharing opposition to taxpayer funded corporate welfare. Jim opposed taxpayer subsidies for business, even his own, which he built from scratch. Steve Thomas met Jim at an event in southeast Michigan, and the two would benefit from their close association and mutual counsel for a quarter century.

During World War II, Jim served with the Army in Burma, and he told the story he believed evinced his good fortune. He and his band of brothers once had to sleep in standing waters. The man on each side of him contracted malaria, but Jim was unscathed. "I've always been lucky," he would say. Jim's sense of gratitude for the people and things in his life helped him persevere through rough circumstances. He made a point of encouraging others to cultivate gratitude.

Jim's philosophical outlook on life was that of small "I" libertarian, and he dedicated his time and treasure to advancing the cause of peaceful and voluntary association. He was long concerned about the direction his country and the larger world were headed. In response, he invested his hard-earned wealth in the people and institutions he thought might best stand up to those who would try to lord over the rest of us. The Mackinac Center was one such institution among many, but Jim invested in individuals, too. A famous proverb says, "A society grows great when men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in." Jim was one of those men.

It is worth emphasizing here that Jim could only invest his wealth in others after first earning it, and that he did. His manufacturing firm lost money its first five years and there were times — while Jim labored seven days a week — that its survival, let alone its success, was in doubt. Though Jim is gone, his business thrives today and has an international footprint.

The long-time reader of *IMPACT* knows that the Mackinac Center has criticized state corporate subsidy programs. Jim was frequently frustrated by these programs, too. He knew that the evidence demonstrating

their ineffectiveness was overwhelming, but he also thought them fundamentally unfair. After all, the way the state hands out subsidies is by first forcibly taking funds from others.

He couldn't help but laugh when the state's corporate welfare department — the Michigan Economic Development Corporation — sent a staffer to regale him with the favors the state could provide to his company. He listened politely but declined to pursue its proverbial free lunch.

After we last dined together — just weeks before his death — Jim remarked how pleased he was to have such youngsters (we are in our 50s) as friends. It's hard to not get emotional about that. He may have felt lucky to have us as friends, but we know we and the freedom movement were the lucky ones. ■

**By Michael D. LaFaive
and Steve Thomas**

Steve Thomas is the chief executive officer of a sports apparel business in Plymouth, Michigan, and an adjunct scholar at the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, where Michael D. LaFaive is the senior director of the Morey Fiscal Policy Initiative.



'I Thought It Was Really Cool What You Could Make Computers Do'

A profile of Steve Frick, the Mackinac Center's manager of information systems

When Steve Frick applied for a job at the Mackinac Center back in 2000, his resume included the quote often attributed to Winston Churchill: "Any man under 30 who is not a liberal has no heart, and any man over 30 who is not a conservative has no brains."

Not the typical thing you would see on a job application for someone who works in computer systems and internet coding. "I think that's what got me in the door for the interview," Frick says.

It was a winding road for him to end up at Michigan's premier free-market think tank. He grew up in central Michigan in a family with deep roots in Mt. Pleasant and Beal City. While attending Sacred Heart Academy in Mt. Pleasant, Frick got interested in technology.

"I thought it was really cool what you could make computers do," he said. A teacher got him access to the computers at Central Michigan University. As a teenager, he made his first program: a blackjack algorithm.

Frick earned a bachelor's degree in math and computer science, and a master's in computer science, both at CMU. After graduation, he worked for a pipeline services company. He then headed out to Washington, D.C., where he worked for two private companies on government contracts before coming

home and eventually working for the state of Michigan.

In 2000, a job opening at the Mackinac Center piqued his interest. The Mackinac Center has several different websites and dozens of databases, with custom software running it all. Hundreds of thousands of people visit them every month. He's responsible for the Center's websites, software development, computer systems and databases. In sum, his job is to make sure that all the work from our policy experts is online and easy for people to find and read.

Frick is most proud of his work on Michigan Votes website, which describes — in plain English — every bill lawmakers introduce and every vote they make. It was launched by Senior Legislative Analyst Jack McHugh shortly after Frick arrived. Today, Frick helps keep it running and adds new features to it. There have been nearly 30,000 votes written and described in the last 20-plus years.

He is busy outside of work as well. He and his first wife adopted six children. He is now remarried, and his wife, Patricia, had previously adopted three sons of her own. So, between them, they have nine children. The youngest is finishing up high school while the

oldest, a daughter, is married to a soldier in the U.S. Army. One son served as a U.S. Marine.

"I've had a lot of different work experience — for private companies, the state government, federal contracts and now the Mackinac Center," Frick said. "I got to see how big and bureaucratic the government really is. It's just great to work with people who respect each other and are motivated to produce research and data tools that advance liberty." ■

Teri Leigh Olson Scholarship Endowment

The Teri Leigh Olson Scholarship Endowment was established in 2013 in memory of Teri Olson, wife of Mackinac Center founding board member D. Joseph Olson. Each year, the Olson Scholarship Endowment provides a Hillsdale College student with the opportunity to complete a 10-week internship at the Mackinac Center. Our 2021 Olson Scholar was Jacob Gudmundsen, a Brigham Young University student who spent his summer as an environmental policy intern. Below, Gudmundsen reflects on his time with the Center.

By Jacob Gudmundsen

When thinking about internships, making coffee runs and delivering reports come to mind.

Not at Mackinac, however.

From the first day I entered the office, I was treated just the same as the other staff. This first impression stayed with me — the sense of camaraderie and support that I immediately felt at Mackinac.

As an environmental policy intern, I spent time reading environmental reports, digging up data on species populations, reviewing policy evaluations from other think tanks, and sorting through environmental regulation, both within and outside of Michigan.

The freedom I was given to investigate topics that interested me was one of my favorite parts of Mackinac. Some of the specific topics of my research included the implicit costs of alternative energy and wolf management in Michigan. Three of my articles were published on the Center's blog.

Another favorite aspect of interning with Mackinac was the wide variety of policy issues I was introduced to. Through the

Intern University program, I participated in discussions on familiar topics, such as economics, but also unfamiliar ones, including the Prohibition period.

If you are a prospective intern or know of college students looking for an experience that will further their knowledge in their own field, while also exposing them to new and relevant information in other fields, the Mackinac Center is the place to be.

If you would like to support the Teri Leigh Olson Scholarship Endowment at the Mackinac Center, please send your gift today to: Mackinac Center for Public Policy, 140 West Main Street, Midland, MI 48640, Attn: Teri Leigh Olson Scholarship. We'll be sure that your contribution is used to support future Olson scholars. ■

