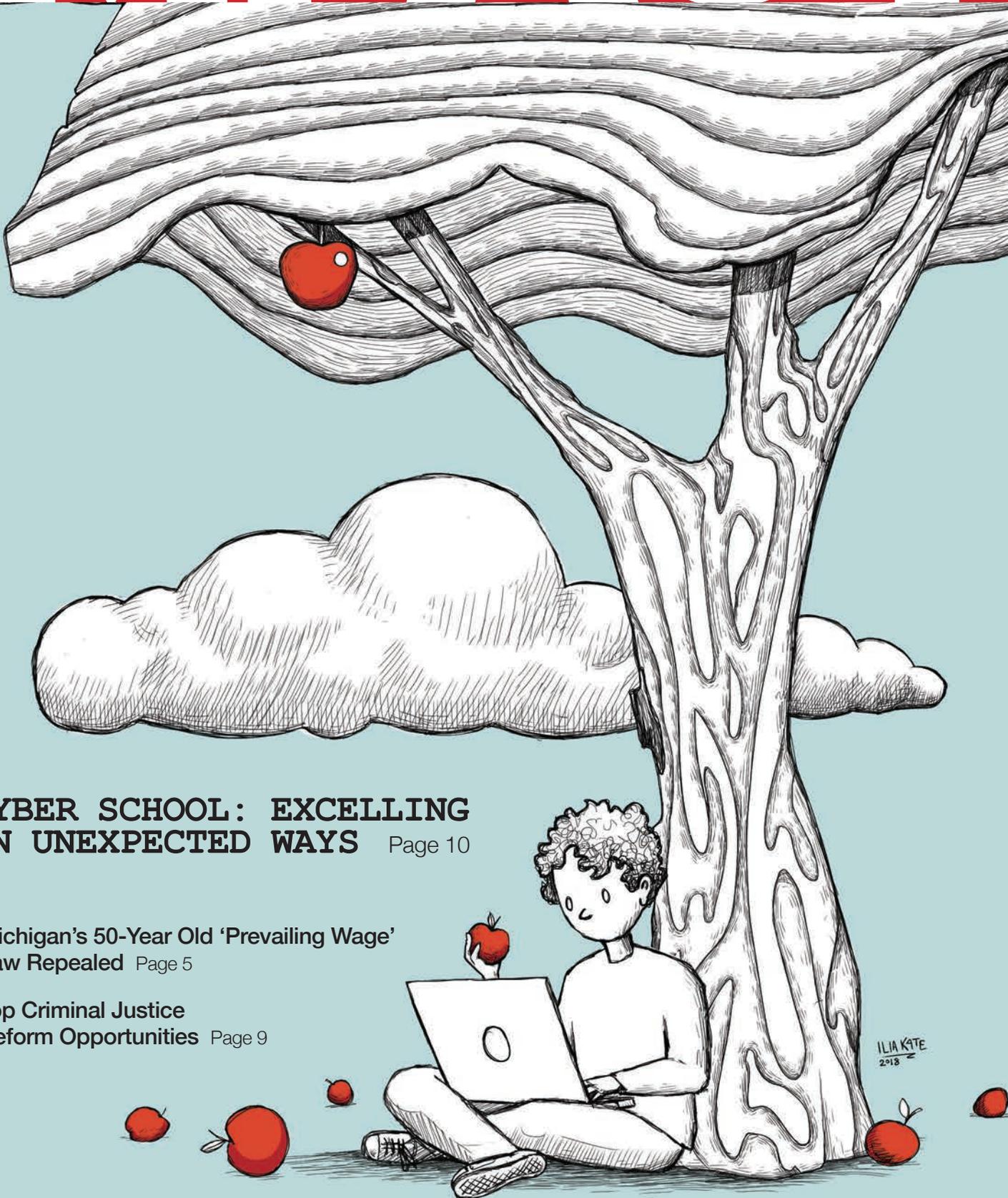


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ILIA KATE
2018



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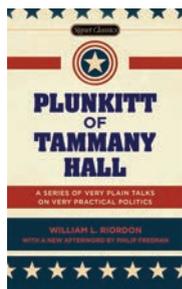
EVAN CARTER RECOMMENDS

Plunkitt of Tammany Hall: A Series of Very Plain Talks on Very Practical Politics

by George W. Plunkitt

Many political activists, unlike the Mackinac Center, believe that government is the solution to society's problems. Few were as forthright about this as

George Washington Plunkitt, who worked in New York City's Tammany Hall political machine from the mid-1800s until the early 1900s. In a collection of speeches compiled by New York Evening Post writer William L. Riordon, Plunkitt boldly advocates for the virtues of what he calls "honest graft," calls patronage "the supreme form of patriotism" and lays out other ideas. With less than 100 pages of straightforward sermonettes for the "everyman," Plunkitt of Tammany Hall can be thoroughly enjoyed in the span of an evening.



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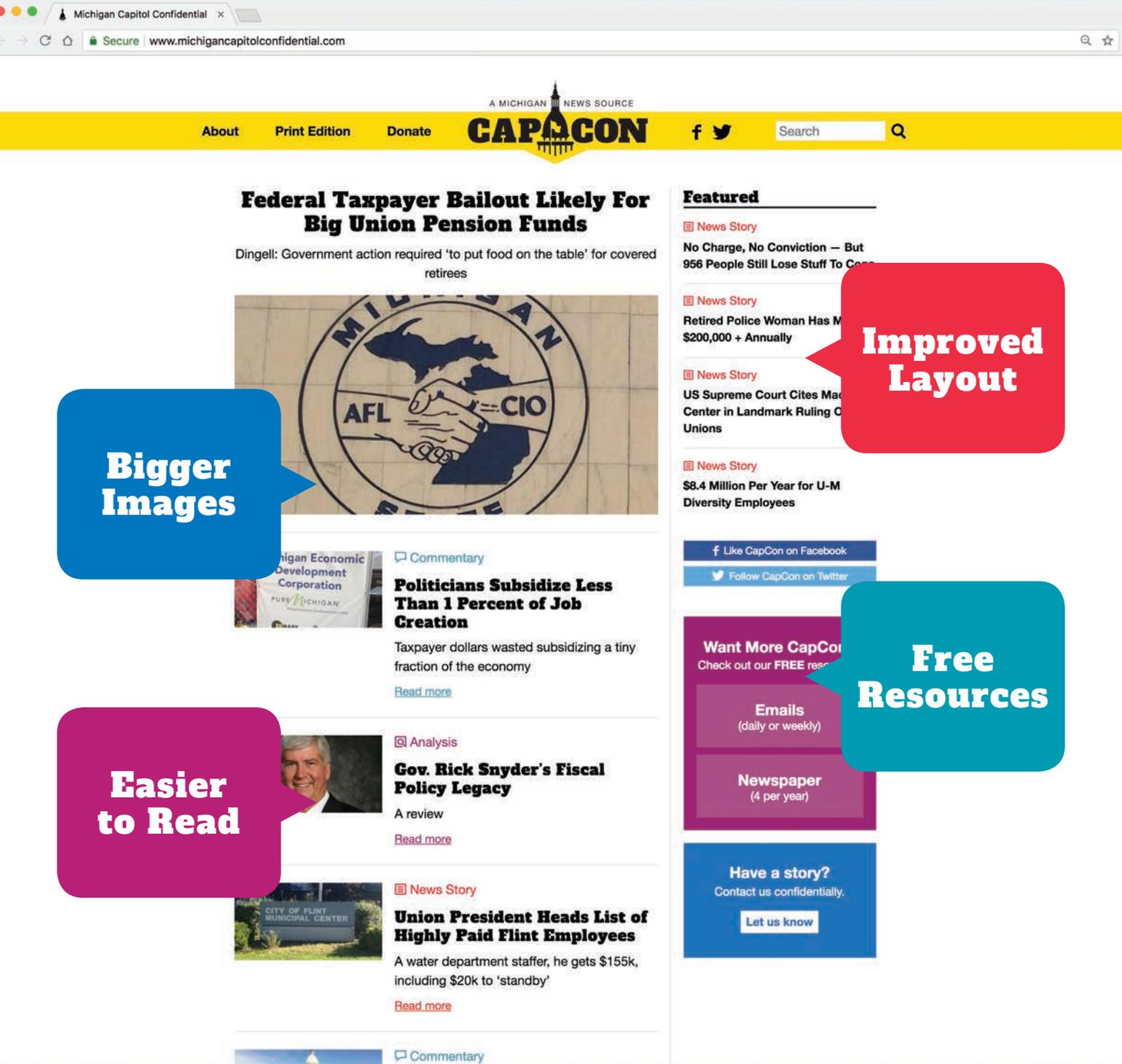
"Giving Back Involves a Certain Amount of Giving Up"



"Well, [the Mackinac Center] has been very successful...[They] actually moved the Overton Window on some of the policy areas [they] worked on. ...[They] proposed privatizing prisons and a few years later Michigan had its first privatized prisons. [They] worked on ... school choice and homeschooling and that was expanded in Michigan."

— *Laura Marsh*
The New Republic

Introducing the new and improved Michigan Capitol Confidential website!





LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Joseph G. Lehman

The Overton Window and Free Speech

JOSEPH G. LEHMAN

The Overton Window is a model of policy change conceived by my late friend, colleague and Mackinac Center senior vice president, Joe Overton. The concept was humbly born as part of a fundraising brochure and later a training session for think tank executives. It is now, however, firmly embedded in the vernacular of seemingly every political news outlet. I recently explained the window for WNYC Studio's "On the Media" radio program, which more than 450 NPR stations help relay to 2 million listeners.

Public policies can be arranged along a spectrum from less free (more government) to more free (less government). The Overton Window defines the range of public policies considered politically acceptable, or more or less mainstream. Ideas outside the window, on either side, are considered too radical by comparison; they lack sufficient public and political support to become law.

The model's power comes from showing how the range of what constitutes acceptable options can shift when think tanks and other influencers articulate, study, develop, and test alternatives to the status quo — policies outside the Overton Window.

Citizens must be able to advocate unpopular ideas if public policy is to catch up with social changes, since new ideas are, by definition, not popular. But a future of improved policies is increasingly threatened by a growing intolerance for free speech. The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education reports it has received 908 requests for help in defending against college campus speech restrictions, including those at large public universities.

Scientific progress provides an analogy for how free speech drives social change and the policies it produces. Scientific norms become outdated when new ideas prove the old ideas wrong or when new ideas show

stronger explanatory power. At any given time, potentially hundreds of researchers are trying to prove today's scientific norms wrong by testing them against alternative ideas or trying to reproduce their results.

This relentless challenge is the core of the scientific method. Without it, it's hard to imagine where scientific progress would come from. We'd be stuck with incorrect notions like phrenology (character and other traits are determined by skull shape), geocentrism (Earth is the center of the universe), the "bad air" theory of disease (supplanted by today's germ theory of disease) and peptic ulcers would be explained by stress and spicy food (the key turns out to be gut bacteria).

Free speech is to social progress and its policies what the scientific method is to scientific progress. Without the freedom to articulate new ideas in public, we'd be forever stuck with the ideas that once prevailed. Consider these once unacceptable ideas: women's suffrage, strong environmental protection, civil rights protection for minorities, the right to form labor unions, representative government (vs. monarchy), gay rights, intolerance of drunken driving, and interracial marriage. This list, too, is endless.

Nobody believes that every shift of the Overton Window is beneficial. That's politics. But without any way to shift the window, we could never change the status quo, which isn't always beneficial, either. Restrictions on speech are fine if you like being ruled by people who know they are always right. Free speech, by contrast, is the foundation for the work of think tanks, or for any person or institution interested in social progress, and it must not be infringed. ■

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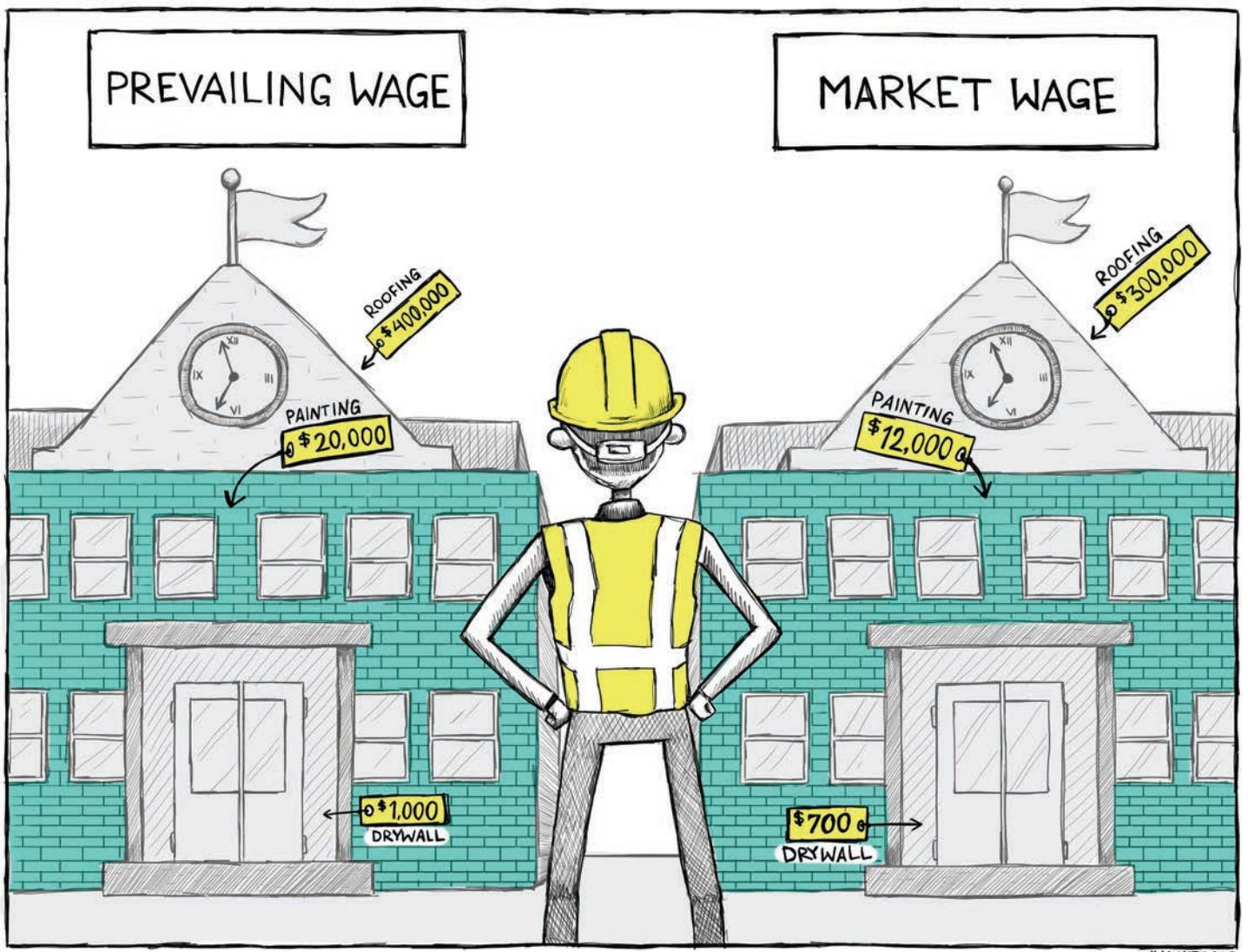
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JOHN LAPLANTE Editor

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ILIA KATE 2017

Michigan's 50-Year Old 'Prevailing Wage' Law Repealed

Michigan has officially repealed its 50-year-old law mandating higher costs on government construction projects. The "prevailing wage" law required union wages on public projects, regardless of whether the work could be done better or at a lower cost through fair bidding.

The law was confusing, requiring that state agencies try to set hundreds of thousands of wage classifications every year. Any homeowner in the state who has had a project done — a deck built, a driveway paved, a room painted — operates by looking at the cost and quality of the work when choosing a contractor. That wasn't the case for schools, universities or cities, though. They had a government mandate

of what to pay — an unfair and inefficient bidding process.

JARRETT SKORUP

Proponents of the law say it resulted in better work and that eliminating it will mean lower wages and worse service. That's a silly argument. School boards and cities aren't forced to pay the lowest cost; they can take into account quality and cost, just like everyone else. If it makes sense to pay more for higher quality, public entities are free to do so. A local community knows more about how much things truly cost than a centralized government trying to enforce a decades-old law.

This law was only repealed because of the hard work of a variety of groups — led by the Associated Builders and Contractors

— that gathered the signatures to present a citizens initiative to lawmakers. The House and the Senate quickly passed the repeal, bypassing a veto threatened by Gov. Rick Snyder. The repeal went into effect this summer.

Eliminating the prevailing wage requirement means more roads, school and government buildings at a better cost moving forward. That's welcome news for everyone. ■

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



Making an Impact Close to Home

I still remember the moment when I told my parents I was going to be a political science major.

They thought I was joking. I hated politics and didn't really watch the news, so it did not seem

like a natural fit.

TAYLOR PIOTROWSKI

At the time, I shrugged off their comments. I knew

that I needed a major and U.S. government happened to be one of my favorite classes in high school. As I wrapped up my first year of college, I grew more and more anxious about my choice for a major. The doubt only grew after a less-than-satisfying experience interning at a state political group that summer. I began to wonder if political science wasn't for me, after all.

Shortly thereafter, I stumbled upon the Mackinac Center. Despite living in Michigan all my life, I knew very little about it. I decided to do some research into what the Center stood for and what its focus was. After reading article after article, I came to a realization.

It wasn't all politics that I didn't care for, just national politics.

My distaste for national politics was solidified in the lead up to and aftermath of the 2016 presidential election, which seemed too remote. It was as if nothing I could say or do would prompt even one person to at least listen to my perspective. Social issues became so sensitive that touching them, even with a ten-foot pole, seemed to do nothing but add more chaos to the maddening stream of social and traditional media coverage.

Instead of returning to the political ring the following summer, I began my first internship at the Center.

The internship lifted a giant weight off my chest. I felt as if what I said mattered and what I was working for was achievable. The policies that we were involved with didn't affect some tiny group of people hundreds of miles away; rather, they touched my neighbors, my friends and my family.

It's not that national issues aren't important. After all, they are what makes America the country that it is. But in my experience, the general public is more attracted to the fashionable issues than the important ones. The Center turns this preference on its head by taking up lesser-known but very important issues and guiding them into the spotlight.

For me, this is much more rewarding. There's nothing quite like talking about occupational licensing to your hairdresser after she's asked what you're up to this summer. It's hard to be apathetic about state policy, especially since it directly affects everyone you know.

When the Center offered me an internship for the second consecutive summer, I couldn't say yes fast enough.

National issues certainly take the cake when it comes to popularity. Anyone you ask could list several pressing national issues across a wide array of topics. Sometimes, though, it isn't a matter of what issues are popular, but which ones will make a difference. I know I can make the biggest impact through state policy work, and I'm thankful that the Mackinac Center is helping me do just that. ■

Taylor Piotrowski is a communications intern at the Mackinac Center.

INTRODUCING

David Guenthner

I was honored to be invited to join the Mackinac Center in late June as its senior strategist for state affairs. I will be based in Lansing and given the responsibility to implement more creative and effective approaches to turn our research and recommendations into implemented policy, and to broaden and deepen our relationships in the Capitol community.

My policy career started as an executive assistant for a Texas lobbyist who ran two small trade associations. Following that, I spent seven years as a credentialed Texas Capitol reporter, all but one of them as managing editor of *The Lone Star Report*, a political insider newsletter. For one year, I was the head of an independent public affairs practice, serving some of Texas' largest trade associations. I worked as a governmental relations liaison for two years, managing economic development and prisoner re-entry initiatives for the Texas Workforce Commission.

In January 2007, I joined the liberty movement as director of media and government relations for the Texas Public Policy Foundation. Since late 2012, I served in a full-time government affairs role as its senior director for public affairs.

While I was at TPPE, I played an important role in some of our victories. We secured groundbreaking criminal justice reforms that have reduced Texas' crime rate to 50-year lows and allowed the state to close eight prisons and defeated a \$21 billion tax-and-fee package to pay for light rail in Texas' metropolitan areas. Legislators also adopted our ideas for increased transparency in higher education, despite the stonewalling of the higher education committee chairmen in both chambers.

At my heart, I am a movement builder — always looking for opportunities to increase the number and effectiveness of policymakers and activists who support free markets and limited government. There are many lessons I have learned from our successes (and failures) in Texas that I look forward to applying in Michigan to build our movement here. ■

A FRESH VISION FOR GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

A successful government affairs program seeks to understand the challenges that legislators face when they pursue principle-based policies, and then provides the research and resources that eliminate or overcome those challenges. The question that underlines effective legislative engagement is, "What do you need to get to 'yes' for sound policy, and of those needs, which can we meet or cause to have met?"



The policy achievements we achieved when I was running the government affairs work at the Texas Public Policy Foundation came as a result of intentionally and comprehensively engaging with our state's policymakers. Our approach was principled rather than partisan, driven by policy rather than personalities. Our message was positive to the greatest extent possible, and our policy experts were told to be approachable and accessible to everyone. We put the interests of our state and our fellow Texans first. We worked with anyone who shared our policy objectives — even when their reasons diverged from ours. And while we produced the research and recommendations that formed the basis of legislation, when legislators filed such a bill, it became their bill and we became partners in their effort.

This approach built political equity for the organization, which, when managed responsibly, provided TPPF with access and influence to accomplish what had been unthinkable.

I have spent much of July and August meeting as many legislators, conservative allies, and association leaders as I can schedule, and seeing as much of Michigan as I can. We are already rebooting relationships that have become strained, establishing communications with new issue allies, and gaining valuable intelligence that will help us set priorities for research and recommendations going into the 2019-20 legislative cycle.

Mackinac's research capacity has long been impeccable, and its communications program has strengthened further under the leadership of my longtime friend Lindsay Killen. Combining those attributes with experienced eyes and ears on the ground in Lansing will help us kick the Michigan Comeback to a higher gear. ■

Top Criminal Justice Reform Opportunities

Mackinac Center expert takes to radio to review opportunities for reform

In early August, the Mackinac Center's director of criminal justice policy, Kahryn Riley, took to the airwaves to discuss the most important justice reforms that either deserve consideration or are already being considered in the state Legislature. Riley was interviewed by Michael Patrick Shiels on the syndicated program "Michigan's Big Show."

Shiels and Riley discussed the opportunities lawmakers have to pass bills that bolster safety through effective spending and smart policy changes. With a declining crime rate and two prison closures slated for this year, Michigan's criminal justice landscape is changing, and it's important to pass reforms that maintain our progress toward greater safety and fairness.

The interview covered Riley's top reform priorities, outlined briefly here:

CIVIL ASSET FORFEITURE

This practice allows law enforcement departments to obtain ownership of private property, sell it and then use the proceeds to supplement their budgets. Current law does not require police to even file criminal charges. The proposed reforms would require them not only to file charges but

to wait until a property owner is convicted before taking ownership of items that have been proved to have been instruments or fruit of a crime.

OCCUPATIONAL LICENSING

In early September, Gov. Rick Snyder issued an executive directive calling for state agencies to remove the "Have you been convicted of a felony?" question from the first round of state job applications and applications for state-required occupational licenses. The governor's action opens up job opportunities for former offenders and offers an example for the private sector. The state requires individuals to have a license if they wish to work in one of over 200 occupations.

OVERCRIMINALIZATION

Michigan has over 3,000 criminal laws on the books. That's many more than any well-meaning person can be expected to know and many more than the state could hope to enforce. We should overhaul our penal code, culling everything outmoded and duplicative and reclassifying crimes so that what remains is intuitive and carries a proportional punishment.

EXPUNGEMENT

Violating one of Michigan's thousands of offenses creates a criminal history that, in most cases, remains on one's record for life. Current law allows individuals with one or two minor crimes to petition the courts to have these removed from their record — if they have the means to navigate the legal system. We should grant people a clean slate, automatically, after a decade without new crimes, so that a greater number of deserving people get a fresh start.

RAISE THE AGE

Michigan is one of only four states to automatically prosecute 17-year-olds as adults rather than juveniles. The juvenile justice system has more flexibility than the adult one to deliver a narrowly-tailored sentence and access to social services, producing better long-term outcomes for youth and substantially lowering their risk of offending again.

BAIL

Although Michigan modified its laws so that people can no longer be jailed for failure to pay fines and fees, thousands of legally innocent people are sitting in county jails because they can't afford their bail. When that happens, these individuals risk losing their housing, employment and even custody of their children. We should give judges more information about an individual's ability to pay so that these collateral consequences don't have to disrupt employers and families.

The criminal justice system represents one of the state's most fearsome powers. The way we treat people inside it can either protect the public or put a drag on its resources. We owe it to ourselves to ensure that our criminal justice policy bolsters public safety and uses resources effectively. These reform opportunities bring us closer to that ideal. ■



DAVID K. FELBECK

A lengthy career as an engineer and scholar kept David K. Felbeck busy, but not too busy to work for the cause of freedom.

A Mackinac Center supporter, member of its Board of Scholars, and member of the Mackinac Center Legacy Society, Felbeck died on Oct. 4, 2017. The Mackinac Center received a generous gift from his estate early this year.

“I have the greatest confidence in everything that all of you are doing and hope that this will help in your good work after I’m gone,” Felbeck wrote in a note to then-Mackinac Center President Lawrence W. Reed in 2005, at the time he joined the Legacy Society.

“He definitely loved you,” Felbeck’s wife, Annamaria Felbeck, told the Mackinac Center recently. “He felt strongly about schools, and your ideas of charter public schools appealed to him.”

Felbeck was involved in education for much of his life. Born in New York in 1926, he earned a degree in mechanical engineering from Cornell University, worked as an instrument mechanic during World War II, served on the staff of the National Academy of Sciences and then taught at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he had earned a graduate degree.

In 1961, took a position as professor of mechanical engineering at the University of Michigan, retiring in 1996.

He frequently was called upon to be an expert witness in court cases, his wife said, using his knowledge of

material strength and fractures, involving everything from artificial knees to energy production.

He also was part of a six-year space shuttle experiment, and his work contributed to the field of aviation technology.

In 2001, Felbeck joined the Mackinac Center Board of Scholars, which helped the Mackinac Center grow its reputation as a respected source of policy research.



David K. Felbeck

Felbeck also was passionate about the Second Amendment and was among the plaintiffs in a Michigan Supreme Court case that upheld a new law regarding firearm ownership in Michigan, Mrs. Felbeck said.

The case involved a firearms law that Michigan adopted in 2001, making it easier for citizens to obtain a concealed pistol license. Previously, local politicians and public officials had wide discretion in deciding who could obtain a license.

The new law standardized the process, requiring officials to grant licenses in the absence of certain exceptions, such when the applicant had a felony conviction.

“He certainly was crucial for our gun laws,” Mrs. Felbeck said.

The Mackinac Center is honored to have been named by Felbeck as a beneficiary in his estate, Mackinac Center President Joseph G. Lehman said.

“As an engineer, David knew the value of research to improving our society. Now his legacy gift will help to support independent and rigorous research to help us advance free-market principles.” ■

OUR LEGACY SOCIETY IS GROWING

Mackinac Center Legacy Society membership has jumped by 17 percent this year as a growing number of our supporters choose to make a gift to the Mackinac Center through their will or estate plan.

As these generous donors know, making plans now to provide a gift to the Mackinac Center after your death is easy to do and has tangible benefits.

Not only do charitable donations reduce your tax burden, but a gift to the Mackinac Center offers the peace of mind of knowing that your hard-earned assets will be used to advance the values that you believe in.

One of the most common ways that our donors choose to make a legacy gift is by naming the Mackinac Center in their will or trust. In a few paragraphs, you can direct that a specific dollar amount or a percentage of your estate be given to the Mackinac Center. Please contact us if you would like sample language.

You also can name the Mackinac Center as a beneficiary of your life insurance plan or retirement plan (such as an IRA), in a charitable remainder trust or charitable gift annuity, or as a beneficiary of your donor-advised fund.

Our Advancement team would be happy to discuss all of these giving methods with you. We also can put you in touch with trusted experts in estate planning who will help ensure that your assets and privacy are protected and that you retain full control of your assets during your life.

When you make a legacy gift to the Mackinac Center, you are automatically enrolled in the Legacy Society and receive its related benefits, including invitations to our VIP receptions and special recognition at our events.

But your greatest benefit will be the knowledge that you are helping to preserve the freedoms we enjoy today for the benefit of generations to come.

As one of our Legacy Society members said, “A bequest to the Mackinac Center will ensure someone is around to fight for individual liberty and economic opportunity after you are gone. I can think of no better gift to leave future generations.” ■

If you would like more information about the Legacy Society, please call Lorie Shane at 989-698-1909 or send an email to shane@mackinac.org. You also can find more information at www.mackinac.org/legacy.

1

Choose who will receive your assets when you die.

6

Choose who will make decisions for you in the event you become disabled.

2

Name guardians to care for your minor children.

6

Reasons to Have an Estate Plan

5

Support the causes you believe in.

3

Protect your hard-earned assets

4

Protect loved ones from creditors.

Without a plan, the courts and the state will make these decisions for you.





CYBER SCHOOL

Excelling in Unexpected Ways

ABIGAIL
HOYT

BEN
DEGROW

Too often limited by our own imaginations, we acquire a narrow view of public schooling and what student success can look like. A meeting with the Hodsdon family from Ortonville, however, shows what can happen when a family steps outside the norm for its education.

The three Hodsdon students take their formal learning far and wide, navigating an ambitious and unconventional schedule, all while fulfilling Michigan's standards for high school completion. They represent a group of students for whom online learning works very well.

With the family motto of "fail faster," it's no wonder these students are a step ahead. After completing eight years at Michigan Connections Academy, one of the state's 14 cyber schools, their lifestyle has adapted to their entrepreneurial and innovative inclinations. The once 13-hour school day (including bus ride) in a traditional school would never do now. The flexibility of full-time online learning in a public charter school has allowed Ben, Noah and Abbey to excel in unexpected ways.

Connections has earned high marks on the last two editions of the Mackinac Center's school report cards, which rely on state test results. For the Hodsdon

family, those high marks barely begin to tell the story they are writing because of cyber school.

Ben, who starts 12th grade in the fall, has created his own robot butler using artificial intelligence. Sophomore Noah is able to devote time to commercial agriculture, while eighth-grader Abbey oversees her own fashion line of wearable technology.

"Everyone I loved told me my decision would ruin my kids. It was scary, but it was the best decision I've ever made."

The children first attended private school, but the cost was too burdensome for the family. They switched into their assigned traditional public school when Abbey, the youngest, started kindergarten.

At their new school, the Hodsdon students faced issues many families are all too familiar with: daily bullying, lack of challenging academics and getting lost in the chaos of a large classroom. Their mother, Sarah, quickly realized these

challenges were blocking their chance at a quality education and knew a change had to be made.

After hearing an advertisement for Michigan Connections Academy, Sarah sought to enroll all three of her children. But a statewide cap on cyber school enrollment meant each had to enter a lottery to secure a spot.

Only Ben's name was selected. Sarah, wishing to keep all three children together, declined the offer but wished to be notified of further openings. Days later, she received a phone call offering spots for all three kids, but she had only 24 hours to make a decision. Despite immense pressure to stay in their current school, the Hodsdons took the leap and enrolled in Connections.

"Everyone I loved told me my decision would ruin my kids," Sarah said. "It was scary, but it was the best decision I've ever made."

Eight years later, the state's enrollment cap is long gone and the family's lifestyle has been transformed to allow for plentiful shares of both creativity and learning. Connections has allowed the students to format their education to accommodate individual learning styles and learn time management. They quickly learned that

to have time for their own activities, they had to be disciplined to complete their homework.

The time management required for cyber school fosters students' initiative and ownership over their learning, which goes beyond the standard curriculum. For this family, afternoons are usually spent inventing, building a shed in the backyard or collecting old speakers from estate sales to learn electrical wiring.

The youngest Hodsdon has grasped a lesson that has escaped some grown-ups. According to Abbey, "Being in virtual school has given me the opportunity to create my own schedule, and it has taught me how I learn and how to manage my time."

Each child brings his or her talents to Maker Faire events, a movement designed to encourage and showcase inventions from around the world. They provide access to a variety of uniquely skilled mentors who can help broaden the knowledge of willing learners.

Sarah inspires her children by reminding them: "If you have the propensity to learn something, you have no reason not to."

The school's flexible approach has also provided the family the opportunity to learn on the road. Since the only requirement for accessing coursework is a Wi-Fi signal, travel and study can work together. For example, Abbey learned about the civil rights movement while doing her online lessons at a local restaurant in Montgomery, Alabama.

"I have a global view of the world because of the flexibility virtual school has given me," Ben confidently told us.

For the Hodsdon family, cyber schooling has been the best educational option. The past eight years at Connections have proved to be the only approach to schooling that would adapt as the children's interests grew, while keeping them connected to quality learning materials.

Online education doesn't have to work for everyone like it has for the Hodsdons in order to remain a viable option for Michigan families. Still, that hasn't stopped Gov. Snyder from seeking to fund cyber school students at lower rates, or teachers union leaders from publicly maligning these schools' performance.

Most recently, state bureaucrats have been quietly writing rules that would make it much harder for cyber schools to receive funding for students they serve.

In all cases, the Mackinac Center has sounded the alarm on the unfair attacks and set the record straight. The Center not only will continue its fight to protect existing parental choices in education, but it will also keep working to create an environment that makes more options available. Our eyes remain fixed on the goal of giving every student and parent in Michigan access to quality learning opportunities that fit their needs and best help them succeed.

As for Sarah Hodson, she is grateful that the flexibility of virtual schooling has helped transform her children's lives. Most families may never blaze a similarly creative trail. But the Hodsdons' story ought to encourage other Michigan parents to take greater ownership of their children's education as they chase bigger dreams. ■

Abigail Hoyt served as the Mackinac Center's summer 2018 education policy intern through the Koch Internship Program. Ben DeGrow is the Center's director of education policy.

"I have a global view of the world because of the flexibility virtual school has given me."

Ben Hodson, 12th grade

"Being in virtual school has given me the opportunity to create my own schedule, and it has taught me how I learn and how to manage my time."

Abbey Hodson, 8th grade





Making Waves

WITH THE MACKINAC CENTER

More than 40 supporters joined the Mackinac Center for its “Making Waves” sunset dinner cruise aboard the Princess Wenonah charter boat on July 18.

As guests traveled along the Saginaw River through Bay City, they saw riverfront areas used for everything from retail stores, parks and homes to marinas, industry and the floating museum USS Edson, a retired naval destroyer permanently docked in Bay City.

The varied scenery matched the evening presentation by Jason Hayes, Mackinac Center director of environmental policy, who spoke to guests about conflicting viewpoints over the use of land and natural resources.

As just one example, he said, ranchers, park rangers, tourists and some environmentalists will have different opinions on reintroducing wolves to Yellowstone National Park. Ranchers might see it as a threat to livestock, while

rangers see it a draw for tourists, and environmentalists see it as preserving a natural species.

Science can inform these disputes by explaining how the natural world functions, Hayes said, but it cannot resolve them.

“While science tells us what is and what can be, it can’t tell us what should be,” Hayes said. “That is the realm of politics and policy.”

The Mackinac Center works to advance free-market environmentalism, Hayes said.

The key principles of this approach are that prosperity helps, incentives matter, and local decision-making and cooperation are better than government regulation.

Free markets lead to prosperity, and prosperity helps with environmental protection, Hayes said. People who prosper have the means to protect natural resources, while those living in poverty are less likely to worry about how their actions might affect the environment.

Incentives matter, too, he added. People who own private property have a strong incentive to protect it and care for it.

In contrast, government managers have different incentives, and turning over land or resources to a government agency is often not the best solution for the environment, Hayes said. Government officials may be under pressure from special interests, or want to grow their department budget or be worried about reelection.

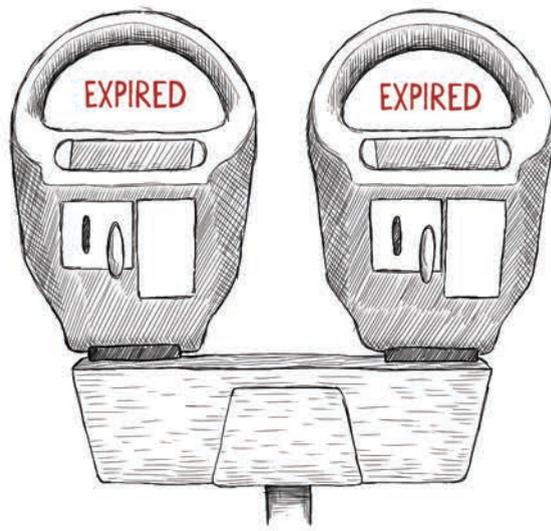
Government managers also are often distant from the problem at hand, Hayes said. Trying to regulate land or resources from afar is often much more inefficient than allowing local citizens and organizations to develop solutions.

Following dinner and Hayes' presentation, many guests spent the last few miles of the three-hour trip watching the sun set from the upper deck of the boat.

"This was our first Mackinac Center dinner cruise, but many guests asked us to make it an annual event," Sandra Darland, event manager, said. "We certainly are considering it." ■

For more information about Mackinac Center activities, please visit our website at mackinac.org/events. We hope to see you at a Mackinac Center event soon.





Make Your Issue More Popular Instead of Complaining About Term Limits

Michigan voters passed term limits in 1992 by a vote of 59-41 percent. Since then, the limits have been scorned by the state's elected officials, interest groups and most Lansing insiders.

JAMES HOHMAN

A lot of things get blamed on term limits.

So I started keeping a list in late 2015, adding to it whenever I hear someone complain about them. I'm sure I missed a social or political ill or two, but here are some things term limits have been blamed for:

Bad roads and poor schools • Cancelling the income tax phase-down • Cuts to revenue sharing and other budget areas • A decline in state quality of life • Declining road quality • Decreased local government power • Empowering lobbyists • Fewer legislative session days • Fireworks law, personal property tax reform, the roads ballot question and the right-to-work law • The Flint lead crisis • Introduction of tax cut bills and perpetual office seeking • Lack of experience and mentors, empowering bureaucrats • Lack of historical knowledge among legislators • Lack of movement on auto insurance reform and road funding • Lack of procedural knowledge • Lack of understanding of budget and tax structure • Large refundable tax credits • Legislator experience • Legislator quality • Legislator racism •

School retirement reform legislation • Lobbyist control of legislature • Losing the best legislators • Loss of experience, knowledge and institutional memory • Loss of relationships that help with complex legislation like auto insurance and Medicaid expansion • State per-capita income declines • Nepotism • No long-term fix for Detroit Public Schools • Poorer quality legislative language and more partisanship • Possible failure to accomplish Gov. Snyder's late-term agenda • Refusal to amend PA 51 road distributions • Relatives running for office • Scandalous legislators • Stakeholder oversight of environmental regulation • The 2015 road deal.

Some of these things are clearly fictitious, and others happen in states without term limits.

There are also gripes on the list that are not about term limits, really. Instead, they are lamentations that the position held by the person making the complaint is unpopular.

Regardless of whether lawmakers are subject to term limits, they want to pass laws that have broad popular support. They want things to be easy. If an idea has widespread public support, lawmakers will probably favor it, too. The surest way to get something passed is to ensure that your issue is popular with the public.

If you really care about an issue and it's not popular enough — or if something passes that you don't like — it's hard to admit that what you want is unpopular. It's easier to blame a procedural thing like term limits for getting in the way.

Consider road funding. Poor quality roads are unpopular but so are higher taxes. It is a conundrum for politicians, but it would be quickly resolved if just one side or the other had broad public support. Yet term limits somehow get blamed for inaction when there is no clear mandate from the people.

The best way to get the policies you want enacted is to shift the Overton Window in your direction. To help your cause, you should know your issue and how it works. Know what people think about it and what can inform them. Figure out what can move people to change their minds. Find compelling evidence, tell persuasive stories. Get your word out.

It's how we move from a situation where right-to-work was a nonstarter in the eyes of state politicians — as it was in the 90s — to Michigan becoming the 24th right-to-work state.

Shifting the Overton Window is something we try to do. And it's more effective than complaining about term limits. ■

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

We are responsible for our attitudes, our actions
and our personal best work.





Two things happened in the early 1990s that changed J.C. Huizenga's life.

First, Michigan passed a charter school law in 1993. Second, the new law took on a deeper significance because his only son, David, was born in 1994.

"It changed from being a public policy issue for me to a very personal issue," said Huizenga, a West Michigan business owner and member of the Mackinac Center Board of Directors. "As I held that infant in my arms, I resolved to do whatever I could to help him achieve a life well-lived."

But he also resolved to tackle a bigger challenge — helping other Michigan children who didn't have the advantages that his own son would have.

By the next year, Huizenga had established National Heritage Academies and opened his first public charter school, Excel Charter Academy in Grand Rapids.

More than two decades later, NHA operates 87 schools in nine states, serving more than 58,000 students in grades K-8. Not only is it one of the largest charter school operators nationwide, but recent research shows that its students make greater academic gains than their peers at conventional public schools.

Because of his leadership and achievements in education, the Center for Education Reform will honor him at its silver anniversary celebration in Miami this October.

He is, the Center says, one of eight individuals it will recognize as "change agents, innovators, and leaders of breakthrough options for learners at all levels."

That's a long way to come for someone who had never run a school before launching NHA, Huizenga said in a recent interview at his lakefront home in Holland, Michigan.

But as someone who appreciates Milton Friedman, he put his trust in the power of competition to improve public education.

"Competition always does two things. It drives up quality and it drives down costs," he said,

recalling Friedman. "Anything government can do, the private sector can do better — and at half the cost."

Huizenga also relied on his education and business experience. He holds a bachelor's degree in economics from Hope College and an MBA from Michigan State University. He founded and is the chairman of Huizenga Group, which manages a portfolio of 13 businesses providing products and services for customers and manufacturers in the security, automotive and pharmaceutical industries, and consumer goods.

Opening his first school was a whirlwind of activity in the summer of 1995, Huizenga said.

He and a fellow education reformer, Mark DeHaan, put together a volunteer curriculum committee and submitted an application to Grand Valley State University by the May 15 deadline. On June 1, Huizenga learned that the university approved his proposal.

"I called DeHaan and I said, 'Mark, I've got good news and bad news. The good news is we've been approved. The bad news is we've got three months to get a school open.'"

"It was an amazing summer. Two guys who had never opened a school before got that school open in three months, which no conventional school district would ever be able to accomplish."

By Labor Day, 174 children had enrolled.

"It blew me away. We actually had to hire an additional teacher. When I saw that kind of response, I said, 'I think we've got something here,'" Huizenga recalled.

Over the next 24 years of growth, NHA built school after school and implemented its standard "four pillars" model of academic excellence, parental participation, moral focus and student responsibility.

"Schools need to be deliberate in their responsibility to involve parents in every aspect of their child's education," said Huizenga, who

Left: J. C. Huizenga, seen here speaking to students from Vanguard Charter Academy.

visits one or two schools per month. “That’s one of my issues with the education system as it is. They think the educational elite need to make the decisions for all these people in the inner cities. Well, no. Let parents make their own decisions about education. That’s a Milton Friedman-ism, too.”

Public schools also need to have a moral component in instruction, he said.

“If our nation is to continue to thrive, we must help students learn in a moral context. Our young children need to fully understand the moral framework that the early Greek philosophers found to be fundamental to a life well-lived. And we’ve lost that in district schools. They are afraid of anything that could be construed to be moral because they’ve confused morality with religion.”

“Our ‘Moral Focus’ curriculum, like other aspects of student learning, is guided by a specific paradigm: the four Greek cardinal virtues of temperance, prudence, justice and fortitude, which traces its origin back to the early Greek philosophers. Names like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle all celebrated these virtues.”

That acknowledgement, along with parental involvement, a moral component and — again — competition are the four things that Huizenga believes could most improve public education in general.

“Since competition drives excellence and efficiency, we must build as much competition into public education as possible,” he said.

“Essentially,” says Huizenga, “what we’re all about is commonsense education — and in education, common sense is not very common anymore.”

In that belief, he and the Mackinac Center are “comrades in arms,” Huizenga said.

A Mackinac Center supporter since 1994, Huizenga joined its board in 2012.

“The Mackinac Center looks for free-market solutions to the problems that confront society,” Huizenga said. “And

the Mackinac Center is needed because government officials are not inclined to look for a free-market solution.”

In addition to being a board member at the Mackinac Center, Huizenga serves on the board of the Acton Institute in



J.C. Huizenga is a member of the Board of Directors of the Mackinac Center for Public Policy.

Grand Rapids, Michigan, and the Salvation Army National Advisory Board. He also previously served as the chairman of the board of Stephen’s Children, a ministry for children living in the slums of Cairo, Egypt; he and the founder of that ministry each opened their first school in the same year.

“...the Mackinac Center is needed because government officials are not inclined to look for a free-market solution.”

As one of the largest for-profit charter management companies in the nation, NHA comes under regular scrutiny from researchers, politicians and media outlets.

A recent study by researchers at the University of Michigan showed that National Heritage schools produce significantly higher gains in math achievement, while a study by Stanford University’s Center for Research on

Education Outcomes showed significant gains in both math and reading.

Another recent study, this one by the Mackinac Center, showed that, on average, Michigan charter schools receive about \$2,782 less per pupil in total funding than conventional public schools.

If one multiplies that amount by the enrollment in NHA schools and in PrepNet, his charter high school company, taxpayers save over \$100 million this year alone, Huizenga pointed out.

Huizenga has a ready answer for critics who depict for-profit charter school companies as entities that focus on profit above children, or line their own pockets with tax dollars.

Huizenga takes issue with the media that relentlessly adds the prefix “the for-profit” to National Heritage Academies, and the critics who give the impression that the profit motive is suspect. “If we can provide a superior education, save the taxpayers millions of dollars, pay a boatload of taxes, and still have some money left over at the end of the year, I think we have created more value than any district or not-for-profit,” he says.

In NHA’s case, the profits are invested back into the company, not distributed to anyone as income.

“I put bread on the table not from National Heritage,” Huizenga said. “The profit doesn’t go into somebody’s pocket; it goes into the next school we build. I make my livelihood off the 13 enterprises that Huizenga Group operates.”

What lies ahead for NHA and PrepNet?

“When we started out, I said that I either want to be the best or I want to join the best solution for public education. So far, we haven’t seen anybody we’d rather trade places with, but we’re always looking. When we find that, we’ll join forces,” Huizenga said.

“So for the future, we’ll keep on opening schools. Those kids need a future.” ■

The Makings of a Meaningful Policy Campaign

A little less than five years ago, I sat with some of my liberty movement peers in a conference room. We were there to discuss strategies that might overcome the obstacles standing between our organizations and the policy reforms they desired. As we talked, we discovered that while we excelled at delivering a polished message, we largely failed to articulate why the results of our proposed solutions would be tangible and meaningful for people in our state. The discussion challenged each of us to think creatively about how we could use our institution's capacities to make sure our message would be emotionally compelling for our neighbors and policymakers alike.

At the time, I was overseeing the policy work of a small but highly effective state think tank, after spending nearly ten years driving communications strategies for some national free-market institutions. After that meeting with my peers, I was more firmly convinced than ever that my experiences gave me the opportunity to help my organization and its allies reimagine what a successful policy campaign would look like. My work in both policy and communications — two very different worlds, it had seemed at times — gave me something valuable: the ability to bring them together in ways that create the momentum necessary for the changes we seek. Legislative, marketing and outreach efforts, each in a vacuum, may produce independent results, but together, they produce more substantial changes.

To make an impact, our team at the Mackinac Center now seeks to ensure that every priority we undertake includes each of the following:

1. **A clear and achievable goal.** It's not enough to have quality research (though that's critically important). We must be able to articulate, map, and achieve our long-term goals by winning incremental victories. To do this, we must have a strong state government affairs strategy.
2. **A story of at least one person who is or will be personally affected.** One person's story can change the hearts and minds of many — and if we aren't able to find one person capable of attesting to the personal impact of the work we're doing, why are we taking on the issue to begin with? Finding people with powerful stories to tell can transform a policy campaign, but it requires a constant emphasis on connecting with individuals in communities.
3. **Aligned organizations from diverse perspectives willing to join the cause.** If our goal is to fundamentally shift widely held principles and perspectives, we can't simply preach to the choir. To reach new constituencies, we must have the right messenger, who may not always be us. So we must build strong partnerships with institutions that will inspire others in their own network to act.

Each of these capacities, acting in concert, moves us from talking at people to talking with people. We will penetrate inertia, show that we will not let the perfect be the enemy of the good, and maintain a focus on empowering people first rather than simply reforming government. If we're successful at the former, it will naturally lead to the latter. ■

BY THE NUMBERS CRIMINAL JUSTICE

2020

That's the year the state's law for using fees to partially fund county courts expires. Lawmakers have until then to come up with an alternative.

21 percent

The number of prisoners in Michigan is down 21 percent, falling from 51,000 in 2006 to 40,000 today.

4

Number of states that charge 17-year-olds as adults. Most states draw the line at 18 years old.



“Giving Back Involves a Certain Amount of Giving Up”

This spring I was fortunate enough to begin the interview process for a coveted internship at the Mackinac Center. In my first few months of employment, my eyes were opened to the complexity of running such a sophisticated organization. More importantly, I was exposed to the importance of small donations in keeping things going. They can come from almost anyone who believes in a cause.

One demographic group I find extremely important is young people. Giving back is often not a priority for young people because it is more difficult for them financially as a college student or young professional. But even a small donation is important; supporting a cause close to your heart gives a sense of personal fulfillment. Giving also opens up a young person — any person, actually — to a group of people who care about the same cause. People who give to the same cause share a passion for the organization and have something in common, regardless of how large or small their gifts may be. And a small gift can have a large effect. For example, a \$25 gift helps us reach 50 people with our publications. It can have a snowball effect through the continuing gifts generated from those publications.

Is giving easy at a young age? No. Does it have many rewards once that sacrifice is made? Absolutely. When reflecting on this topic, I think of a quote from General Colin Powell, who said, “Giving back involves a certain amount of giving up.” Always remember that a small gift given today might greatly affect someone else’s tomorrow. ■

Garrett Heise is an intern at the Mackinac Center, focusing on advancement and events.