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**MACKINAC
IN THE
MEDIA**



James Hohman on WILX 10

The Detroit News

Leadership is more than just being in charge

“Whitmer’s lockdowns carried immense costs to civil liberties, livelihoods, productivity, mental health, unemployment and education — consequences we are still dealing with today.”

Michael J. Reitz, Executive Vice President

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

The Secret Ballot Meant Victory for Mercedes-Benz Workers

“When your co-workers can see your stance on unionization, you have an incentive to go along with the loudest voices, which typically belong to activists.”

Tony Daunt, Senior Director of Workers for Opportunity and Steve Delie, Director of Labor Policy

Bridge

Who should control Michigan’s medicine cabinet?

“While the interest to reduce drug prices is commendable, a willingness to move forward without protecting patient access to treatments and with no accountability to citizens is a perilous prescription.”

Naomi Lopez, Adjunct Scholar

MORNING SUN

People don’t lose their skills by moving to Michigan – but that’s how the state treats them

“Countless others run into the same barriers because Michigan doesn’t automatically reciprocate or recognize many licenses from other states.”

Jarrett Skorup, Vice President of Marketing and Communications

The Detroit News

Minimum wage mandates are bad for the economy

“There is so much evidence to demonstrate the harm such mandates do, it’s a wonder they are championed at all.”

Michael LaFaive, Senior Director of Fiscal Policy and Rebekah Paxton, Director of Research and State Coalitions at the Employment Policies Institute



What Is ‘Freedom Conservatism’?

Freedom Conservatism is a response to the deepest fractures in the center-right political movement since at least the Cold War. The principles of Freedom Conservatism answer the question, “What do we believe?”

The term doesn’t exclude liberty-minded folk, but it is at odds with illiberalism and postliberalism, whose adherents cozy up to authoritarianism, populism and collectivism.

My friend John Hood of North Carolina, a leader in the State Policy Network, spearheaded the Freedom Conservative statement and asked me to join its signatories.

Here is a condensed version of those principles. I believe in these principles, which represent what the Mackinac Center has always stood for:

1. Liberty. Among Americans’ most fundamental rights is freedom from arbitrary force. Political freedom cannot long exist without economic freedom.
2. The pursuit of happiness. Most individuals are happiest in communities where parents are free to engage in meaningful work and raise children according to their values.
3. The foundation of prosperity. Free enterprise, with competitive markets, individual choice and free trade, is the foundation of prosperity. We commit to reducing the cost of living by fighting government intervention and private cronyism.

“The Constitution is the best arrangement for granting government just authority while leaving many policy choices to families and communities.”

4. Full faith and credit. Skyrocketing federal debt threatens all Americans. We commit to fiscal sustainability for a more prosperous and secure nation.
5. A nation of laws, not men. Equality under the law is under attack by unaccountable and unelected regulators who exceed their statutory authority and abridge Americans' rights. The president should nominate policymakers and judges committed to upholding these rights.
6. Americans by choice. Immigration is a principal driver of American prosperity and achievement. America is exceptional because anyone can seek to live in America and become an American.
7. Out of many, one. A diverse nation like the United States is endangered when too many decisions lie in the hands of centralized authorities. The Constitution is the best arrangement for granting government just authority while leaving many policy choices to families and communities.
8. America's promissory note. Martin Luther King Jr. described the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence as containing “magnificent words ... a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir.” Prior to 1964, segregation was enforced by state

governments and, in many cases, by the federal government. Many who descend from victims of this system now face economic and personal hurdles. We commit to expanding opportunity for those who face challenges due to past government restrictions. We adamantly oppose racial discrimination in all its forms.

9. The shining city on a hill. American foreign policy must be judged by one criterion above all: its service to the just interests of the United States. Americans are safest and freest in a peaceful world, led by the United States.
10. Freedom of conscience. Freedom to say and think what one believes is essential. Federal and state governments have a legal obligation to protect these freedoms. Private institutions have a moral obligation to do the same.

(See the full version at FreedomConservatism.org.)

You can count on the Mackinac Center to uphold and advance these principles in Michigan and beyond. ■



A stylized, handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joe".

By Joseph G. Lehman
President of the Mackinac Center



Across the state, educational options are expanding as parents demand better choices for their children.





Mackinac Center Explores Alternative Education Models in Michigan

Michigan's education landscape is evolving in response to parents' growing demand for more diverse learning options. Innovative, alternative educational models are emerging to give parents more choices for meeting their children's unique needs.

In West Michigan, families can find unconventional learning approaches for their children thanks to a variety of models that have opened in recent years. Blue Bridge School, founded by Candis Ogilvie, provides flexible programs for students who are homeschooling or looking to supplement their learning with real-world, hands-on experiences. Ogilvie uses a community-based educational framework that fosters skill-building through collaboration and self-directed learning.

Thrive Learning Center, founded by Melissa VanTil and Amanda VanderWall, offers a student-centered, play-based model for children in grades K through 8. Its flexible schedule and mixed-age classrooms attract families seeking unconventional approaches that address their particular needs. Parents of young children who love exploring the outdoors can also send their kids to TreeSchool, where learning takes place year-round at a park. This multi-age program for kids ages 3 to 8 uses nature and exploration to develop students' skills and cultivate a love of learning.

In Kalamazoo, high school students can learn valuable career and life skills at Education in

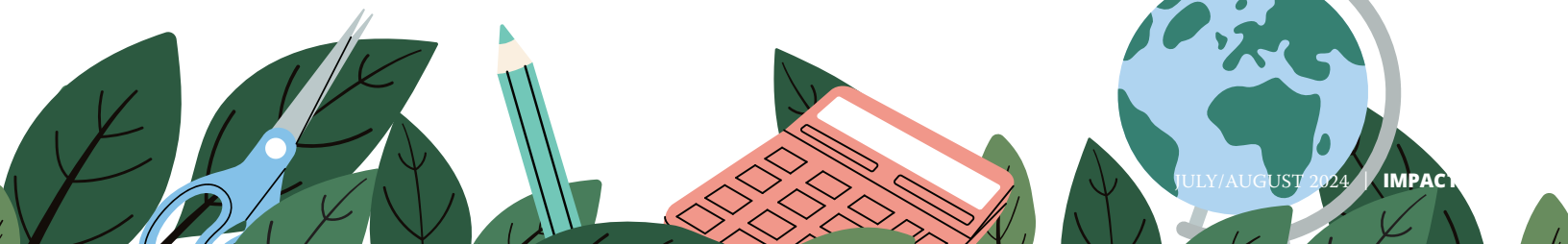
Action, a project-based learning model at Heritage Christian Academy. Ninth graders learn to run a sustainable business by operating a greenhouse, marketing their plant products and engaging with the community. The innovative A+ Greenhouse program is run by a teacher with an engineering background. She integrates the core subjects of science, math, economics and English.

In Detroit, homeschooling parents can receive free coaching and access to community resources by joining Engaged Detroit, a co-op founded by Bernita Bradley. They can also enroll their young children in Every Child is a Genius, an affordable early learning center founded by Highland Park's Boniswa Brock. The school's evidence-based approach fosters problem-solving through a hands-on STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and math) curriculum.

Across the state, educational options are expanding as parents demand better choices for their children. The Mackinac Center is committed to ensuring greater access to alternative learning models for families who want flexible and individualized approaches that help their children thrive. ■



By Molly Macek
Director of Education Policy





Meet the Mackinac Center's 2024 Interns

Joining us for her third summer as an advancement intern is **Amelia Molitor**. She will be a junior at Walsh University, where she is studying psychology and theology. She oversees the running and hiking club, as well as the College Republicans club.

Michaela Stiles is this summer's CapCon intern. She is a Hillsdale alumna and current Florida State University graduate student, studying voice performance. Michaela loves the Mackinac Center's culture of collaboration.

Tyler Conrad, a recent Hillsdale College graduate who studied economics, is one of this year's legal policy interns. His favorite thing about working at the Mackinac Center is getting hands-on experience in issues affecting the state.

Matthew Wright joins us for his second summer as a research intern. He will be a senior at Michigan State University, studying political theory and constitutional democracy. He is an avid reader.

A recent graduate of Michigan State University with a degree in economics, **Craig Orji** is an environmental and energy policy intern. Craig values the way the Mackinac Center follows its free-market principles, rooted in liberty for all.

Valerie Check will be a junior at Hillsdale College, where she studies English and religion. She joins us for her second summer as an advancement intern. In her free time, she enjoys playing volleyball and hiking.

Sarah Rakoczy is an intern in the communications department. Sarah is going into her fifth year at Saginaw Valley State University, where she is president of the Turning Point USA chapter. Sarah is studying political science and plans to run for office one day.

Jordan Barker is part of the advancement team, going into his fourth year at Northwood University





By Naomi Saneda
Communications Intern



By Sarah Rakoczy
Communications Intern

in business administration. He enjoys Michigan's beautiful summers by playing golf or, if he's lucky, being on the water with a fishing pole in hand.

Samuel Peterson is a native Floridian and recent graduate of Grove City College, where he studied economics. He is this year's fiscal policy intern. Sam appreciates the Mackinac Center's culture of working toward the shared goal of expanding free markets and liberty throughout Michigan.

Heather Juskiewicz is this year's events intern. She will be a sophomore at Hillsdale College. Her favorite parts about working at the Mackinac Center are meeting people, planning events, and seeing that the work behind the scenes truly makes an impact.

Naomi Saneda, one of this year's communications interns, is going into her sophomore year at Patrick Henry College, where she studies economics and business analytics. Her favorite part of the Mackinac Center is working with people who are

dedicated to freedom and the pursuit of liberty.

A recent Hillsdale graduate, **Ewan Hayes**, is the other legal intern this summer. In his free time, he pursues art and enjoys playing his guitar.

Joy Nickoloff is an advancement intern this summer and is a senior at Northwood University, studying business administration. Joy is passionate about the values the Mackinac Center exemplifies.

This summer's graphic design intern is **Hannah Golab**. She is going into her senior year at Saginaw Valley State University, majoring in graphic design. In her free time, she travels Up North, reads and visits friends.

This summer's education policy intern, **Olivia Michiels**, is a rising senior at Hillsdale College, where she studies economics. She enjoys the Mackinac Center because everyone is passionate about what they do, and that makes a great environment. ■





'DUTY, HONOR, COUNTRY'

Nick and Martha DeMiro are exemplars of American values





Nick DeMiro's story begins in Verona, New Jersey, where he enjoyed a childhood filled with sports and large family gatherings. He attended the United States Military Academy at West Point, graduating in 1989 with an aerospace engineering degree. As an aviation officer in the U.S. Army, Nick piloted Huey helicopters in Germany and Alabama, rising to the rank of captain.

Martha's roots are in Mansfield, Ohio, though she pursued a B.A. in studio art from Marymount College in New York, graduating in 1990. The two met and married that year, beginning a partnership built on shared values and mutual respect.

Martha was a proud Army wife and supportive homemaker during Nick's career.

In 1995, after Nick's military service, the DeMiros settled in southeast Michigan. Over the past 29 years, Nick has carved out a successful career in automotive manufacturing. The couple resides in Rochester, Michigan, and they take pride in their three children and three grandchildren, passing on the same values they hold dear.

Nick's Italian immigrant grandparents and Martha's Midwestern upbringing have profoundly influenced their approach to life and giving. Their

charitable philosophy is rooted in their Christian faith and America's founding principles. They give with purpose and conviction, supporting organizations that reflect the West Point motto "Duty, Honor, Country." Their parents and grandparents taught them the values of hard work, gratitude and generosity.

The DeMiros believe a free-market system, with limited government, is the most effective way to protect our freedom. They view the protection of

life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as an American duty. In today's climate, they see their support for the Mackinac Center as a stand for social

and economic freedom.

"Our support for the Mackinac Center is our commitment to safeguarding the freedoms we cherish," Nick says. For Nick and Martha, philanthropy is about more than giving back — it's about shaping a future where freedom and opportunity will flourish for generations to come. ■

“Our support for the Mackinac Center is our commitment to safeguarding the freedoms we cherish.”



By Nathan Burgard
Donor Relations





**MACKINAC
CENTER WARNS**

CONGRESS

**ABOUT UNFAIR, DECEPTIVE
UNION TACTICS**

I had the privilege to testify in May before the United States House Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions. The subcommittee got a chance to hear Mackinac Center perspectives on union tactics that undermine free and fair elections in the workplace.

For decades, unions have attacked workers' right to choose whether to join a union through a secret ballot election. Unions can organize workplaces through two different approaches: secret ballot elections or a process known as "card check." A secret ballot election is what it sounds like — workers make a private choice about unionization, free of outside influence. Card check, on the other hand, exposes workers to deception, intimidation and coercion.

Under card check, a union organizer asks workers, often in front of peers, to sign a card to publicly support the union. This creates subtle pressure, as workers may choose to sign a card to avoid offending the organizer. In many cases, workers who have yet to sign face constant harassment by union officials, some of whom make multiple visits to workers' homes to solicit signatures. But the unfair pressure doesn't stop there.

Card check allows unions to go well beyond mere pressure and into outright coercive behavior. In one instance, a signature gatherer threatened a worker by saying the union would come after her children and slash her tires. Another union official threatened to report a migrant worker to immigration officials. But not all unsavory tactics are so direct. Unions often misrepresent the impact of signing a card, suggesting that it is merely a request for an election rather than a de facto vote for union representation.

Unions aggressively pursue card check even if it means denying employees a vote. To avoid a secret ballot, unions often pressure employers to enter so-called neutrality agreements. While styled as an agreement by an employer to stay neutral during union elections, these agreements bar employers from discussing their perspective on unionization. This deprives employees of key information they need to make a fully informed decision.

Not all employers enter into these agreements willingly, in which case unions frequently turn to a coercive tactic known as a corporate campaign. Essentially, these are public relations campaigns designed to put social pressure on employers to

force them to accept neutrality agreements. For unions, these campaigns are a zero-sum game. One Grand Rapids-area union official said the success of a campaign could be measured "in one of two

ways: either a ratified, signed collective bargaining agreement with a previously nonunion employer or a significant curtailment of a nonunion operator's business, including shutting the business down." Shutting down a business might be in the union's interest, but it does precious little for newly unemployed workers.

Yet another union tactic is known as "salting." Salting occurs when a union sends one of its employees to sow discontent at a business it hopes to unionize. Salts are under no obligation to disclose that they are being paid by a union, leaving employers with little ability to counter this practice. Employers, meanwhile, are required to disclose the labor consultants they hire within 30 days.

“Workers deserve a free and fair choice about whether to join a union.”

This unfair advantage makes a difference. Workers United, the union responsible for organizing Starbucks franchises in New York, regularly engages in salting. Salts were used at the first Starbucks that unionized, and Workers United paid almost \$2.5 million to 41 individuals as part of the campaign. This unfairness might be why 75% of Americans believe unions should be required to disclose salts.

Collectively, these tactics give unions an unfair advantage when attempting to organize workers. But workers deserve a free and fair choice about whether to join a union. The best way to ensure that workers can express their honest opinion about unionization is to require a secret ballot in union elections. This eliminates coercive tactics and lets workers make their true voices heard.

Thankfully, the Mackinac Center, through its Workers for Opportunity initiative, is at the forefront of protecting the American worker's right to a secret ballot. Workers for Opportunity has played a key role in the passage of bills across the country that guarantee unions be elected by a secret ballot whenever a project receives state funding. In 2023, Tennessee was the first state in the nation to pass such a law, with Alabama

and Georgia following this year. Workers for Opportunity will continue to push for the adoption of similar laws across the country.

It was my privilege to have been invited to share the Mackinac Center's labor expertise with Congress. But there is more to be done to ensure that workers have the right to a truly free and fair choice about union elections. As we look forward, I am excited to continue advancing pro-worker policies that will drive a better future. ■



By Stephen Delie
Director of Labor Policy





MORE THAN A PAYCHECK

WHY WORK IS ESSENTIAL FOR FULFILLMENT

A June 24 Mackinac Center President's Council event featured David Bahnsen, who discussed his book "Full-Time: Work and the Meaning of Life." Mackinac Center President Joseph G. Lehman provided an organizational update before Bahnsen talked about his book with Mackinac Center Director of Research Michael Van Beek.

Too many people have a low view of work, Bahnsen said, having fallen into a mindset of "work until I don't have to anymore." This, he said, is contrary to the true nature of work, which is core to our being. Each person, Bahnsen argued, is designed in the image of God and thus meant to be productive. "Our greatest happiness comes when we are ourselves having our needs met by meeting the needs of others."

So is retirement bad? Not necessarily. Those who retire can still find great fulfillment by being productive – through volunteering, church involvement, or even hobbies.

We should discard the idea of "work-life balance," Bahnsen told the audience. No one talks about a "marriage-life balance," or a "kids-life balance," he observed. Work cannot be "balanced" with life because it is part of life. Such a vital part of human happiness should not be looked down upon or seen as something to be endured until retirement.

We were not made for leisure, Bahnsen said, "we were made to work." ■



By Heather Juskiewicz
Events Intern





CapCon Helps Michigan Workers Understand Their Workplace Rights

Mike Williams, an auto repair paraprofessional at Northwest Education Services in Traverse City, reached out to Michigan Capitol Confidential in December 2022 about his frustration with the Michigan Education Association. The union was supposed to represent him and his co-workers, he said, but it was largely absent from the bargaining table.

Williams and his co-workers, after years of inaction by the union, were setting out to decertify the MEA.

The union had only secured a 70 cents-per-hour raise between 2007 and 2017, Williams told CapCon. Unhappy with this performance, he left the union, though he later rejoined at the request of colleagues. They took it upon themselves to

negotiate their 2021-24 contract, with no help from the MEA.

Williams and his team got help from several parties, including the Mackinac Center for Public Policy. Although it was not easy, they were able to form a new association recognized by the Michigan Employment Relations Commission, Williams told CapCon.

It's important for Michiganders to know their employment rights and exercise them, as this story shows. Williams, aided by the Mackinac Center and CapCon, led by example, showing other workers throughout the state that, if they are dissatisfied with their representation, they can make effective change.

Michigan repealed its right-to-work law in 2023. CapCon has since seen many people come forward





for help in understanding their rights. Their bravery will help others get fair treatment in the workplace.

One of the joys of reporting news for Michigan Capitol Confidential is helping people understand their rights. If other bargaining units or employees are dissatisfied with their representation and want to know how to decertify or deauthorize their union, they can contact Michigan Capitol Confidential or the Mackinac Center.

We will work to help them protect their rights. ■



By Jamie A. Hope
*Assistant Managing Editor of
Michigan Capitol Confidential*

ONLINE RESOURCES



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MACKINAC CENTER FIGHTS FOR AFFORDABLE AND RELIABLE ENERGY

On May 20, 2021, the Palisades Nuclear Generating Station, a vital component of Michigan's safe and reliable energy infrastructure, was taken offline despite having almost a decade remaining on its approved operating license. That action removed over 7 million megawatt-hours — 15% of the state's emissions-free electricity supply and more electricity production than all the state's wind and solar had generated in 2021 — from Michigan's energy supply.

Entergy, the plant's owner/operator, and Consumers Energy had planned this closure since 2016. But it wasn't until the final moments of the plant's life that Gov. Gretchen Whitmer suddenly decided keeping it open was important. Gov. Whitmer's late-to-the-game support grabbed headlines but was ineffective at stopping the plant's closure because nuclear permitting decisions are made over years or even decades, not days.

The Mackinac Center has consistently pushed back against misguided state and federal energy policies that disrupt regional electricity markets by mandating and heavily subsidizing unreliable forms of electricity generation. We argue that government

should stop handing out any energy subsidies. In The Wall Street Journal, Fox News, and USA Today, as well as on radio and podcasts, we have explained how government boosterism for unreliable wind and solar makes it difficult for reliable energy sources, like nuclear, to remain economically viable.

We have highlighted the dangers posed by net zero policies and warnings from grid operators like the Midcontinent Independent System Operator and the North American Electric Reliability Corporation. Energy experts in these organizations explain how a rushed transition to wind and solar harms the nation's electric grid's reliability and increases the threat of blackouts.

We have also shown how Gov. Whitmer's enthusiasm for nuclear power, as expressed in her Johnny-come-lately support for the Palisades Plant, demonstrates the contradictions of her net zero climate agenda. Her policies — the MI Healthy Climate Plan — require the state to achieve net zero carbon dioxide emissions by 2050. But state and federal policies that mandate and subsidize ever more wind and solar drive nuclear plants out of business, even though they promise rock-solid reliability and zero emissions.

“Government’s view of the economy could be summed up in a few short phrases: If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it.”

- Ronald Reagan

Photo by alamy.com

Rather than stopping harmful mandates and subsidies, state and federal officials like Gov. Whitmer and President Biden attempt to mitigate the damage their policies cause by ladling on even more subsidies and loans. A recent decision from the Department of Energy commits to a \$1.5 billion loan to aid in restarting Palisades.

Michigan’s experience demonstrates that political maneuvers, mandates and subsidies lead to energy policies that threaten the health and well-being of Michiganders. Reopening the Palisades Nuclear Plant is a crucial step to maintaining energy reliability. It will lessen the damage caused by destructive government subsidies and mandates for wind and solar. But the means of achieving this correction fail basic free-market principles. The market-distorting subsidies and mandates at the root of the problem must be repealed. ■



By Jason Hayes

*Director of Energy and
Environmental Policy*

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FOR PUBLIC POLICY

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WILL THE LEGISLATURE REINSTITUTE THE ODIOUS DUES SKIM?



One of the ugliest public policies of the last two decades was the dues skim. It allowed the politically connected Service Employees International Union to divert millions from the elderly and disabled and use that money to do nothing more than everyday lobbying. The skim began in 2005 and the Mackinac Center brought it to an end in 2013.

Unfortunately, some members of the Legislature are seeking to bring it back.

The Home Help Program is a Medicaid program that pays for help for those who live at home with a disability. Most of the care providers are relatives who help their disabled adult children or elderly parents.

These providers and their loved ones became the target of a scheme that allowed the union to tap into federal Medicaid funding, taking more than \$34 million. The union and its political allies created the Michigan Quality Community Care Council to make home help care look somewhat akin to a traditional employer-union relationship and allow for collective bargaining.

There is, however, nothing to be bargained over. The Legislature has to approve any funding, rendering the so-called bargaining nothing more than political posturing. But the lack of any real practical impact (other than the SEIU cashing in)

isn't standing in the way of lawmakers trying to resurrect the program.

We recently saw firsthand that lawmakers and the SEIU are back to using the same tired talking points. In June, several Mackinac Center staff members and interns took a trip to Lansing after (likely mistakenly) getting invited to an SEIU rally on the steps of the Capitol.

We arrived at the rally before it began and spoke with reporters as the SEIU looked on.

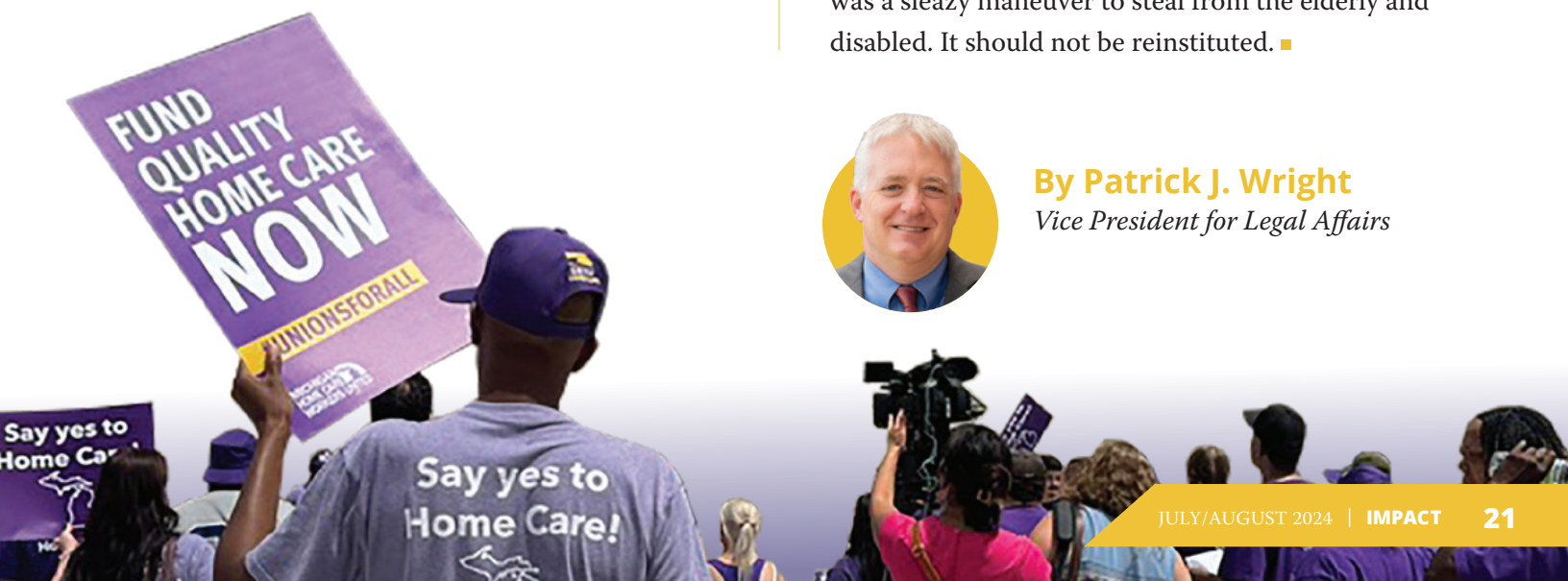
A common theme of attendees and speakers was that the union was needed to ensure greater funding for the home health care program. Yet the reality is that since caregivers stopped being forced to pay union dues and SEIU membership plummeted, funding for the program has grown considerably. During the last year of the dues skim, the Legislature appropriated \$292 million for home health services. The 2023-24 budget appropriated \$540.9 million.

So why the need for a union? Because that union might collect millions of dollars that could then be donated to the political party of its choice. The legislation requires what it refers to as mandatory training – and it appears that only a friendly union will meet the criteria.

Whatever the reasoning behind the dues skim, it was a sleazy maneuver to steal from the elderly and disabled. It should not be reinstituted. ■



By Patrick J. Wright
Vice President for Legal Affairs



PUPPET MASTER, DUNGEON MASTER, DESIGN MASTER

Mick McArt brings magic to the Mackinac Center's
graphic design department

Mick McArt has a last name that would seem to lead inevitably to a career as a cartoonist, author and graphic designer. But his path to the top of the Mackinac Center's graphics department was anything but direct.

"I went to college to study archaeology because I was fascinated with biblical history," Mick says. "But it was more difficult than I thought, and my grades were suffering, so to boost them, I took some art classes."



Mick entered the field of graphic design right out of college. For 25 years, he designed all marketing and communications materials for Duro-Last, a Saginaw County roofing manufacturer with half a billion dollars in annual sales.

Mick is a true Renaissance man. Before entering college, he worked as a dishwasher in a Chinese restaurant and then on the floor of an auto manufacturing plant. During high school, Mick and some friends started an underground music magazine that got big enough to interview bands on their tour buses. Today, he designs games and dabbles in photography.

Oh, and he also works as a puppeteer.

"A friend and I wrote and performed a puppet show that we filmed and sold at festivals," Mick says.

"It was pretty wild. Let's just say part of it involved gunpowder and puppets blowing up." They briefly entered negotiations to sell the show to MTV.

Mick grew up in Tawas, Michigan, the son of parents who moved from Detroit. While he assembled pneumatic parts for cars after high



school, Mick was inspired by colleagues to go to college. He went to Central Michigan University to study archeology and art.

After college, Mick started the graphics and design department at Duro-Last, working on billboards, newsletters, magazine ads, business cards, brochures, booklets and logos for contractors. He came to the Mackinac Center to do work that he values personally.

“I wanted to do something with my skill that wasn’t just advertising a product,” Mick said. “I love the cause and the idea that my work is advancing freedom. I use art to communicate our timeless policy ideas to people in a new way.”

When Mick isn’t at work, you can often find him at art festivals and book signings across Michigan and the Midwest. He started out writing Christian children’s

books before moving into the comedy-fantasy realm. His eighth book in “The Unremembered Realms™” series recently came to market.

“I love making people laugh, and the comedy-fantasy style of book is what I grew up with,” Mick says. “I wanted to take a similar style and just do it in a more wholesome way.”

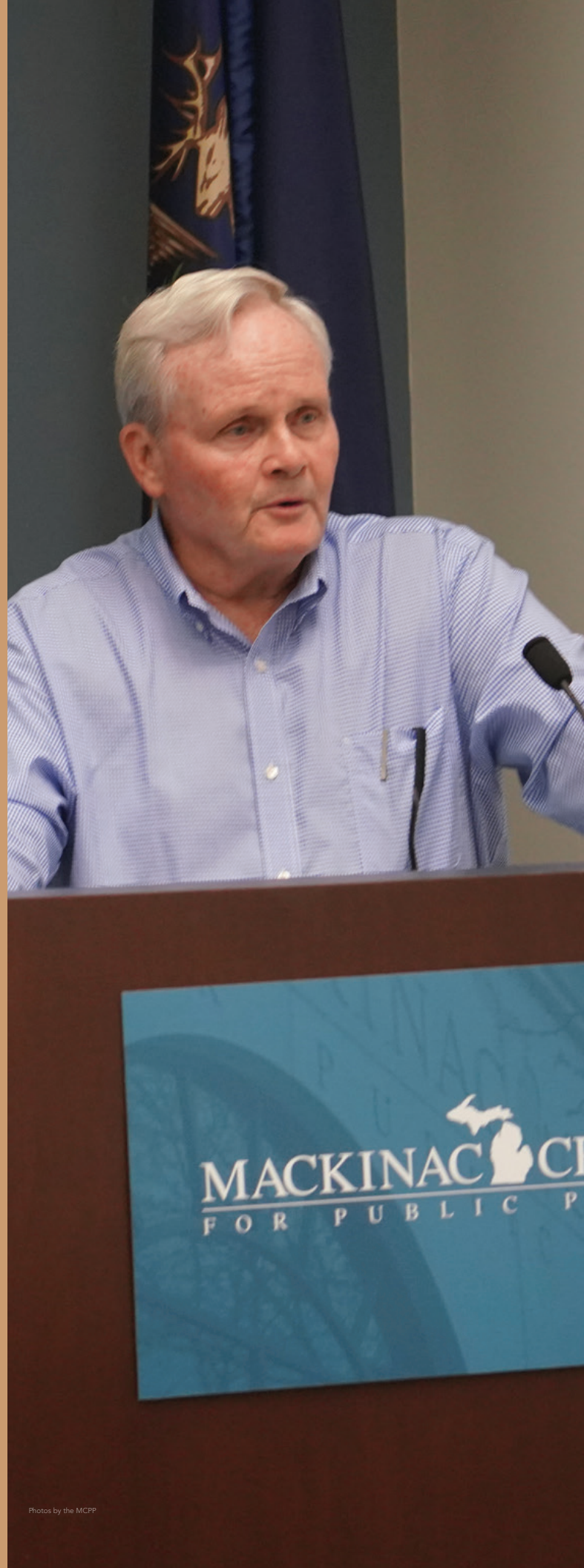
Mick and his wife Erica have two sons (Micah and Jonah) and a daughter (Emerald). The family enjoys fantasy reading and board games. ■



By Jarrett Skorup

Vice President for Marketing and Communications





THEOLOGY, SOCIALISM and AMERICA'S PASTIME

Mackinac Center President Emeritus Lawrence Reed visited Midland in July to reconnect with old friends, new staff members and this year's class of interns.

Reed toured the Mackinac office and was particularly impressed by the newly opened media studio. Reed and current Mackinac Center President Joe Lehman remarked on how far Mackinac has come since its original pizza shop office.

A prolific economist, journalist and speaker, Reed was the Mackinac Center's first president, serving from 1988 to 2008. Joe Lehman describes his predecessor as a "one-man think tank."

At the office, Reed had lunch with interns and staff before discussing his new book as part of the Mackinac Center's Intern University lecture series.

"Was Jesus a Socialist? Why This Question Is Being Asked Again, and Why the Answer Is Almost Always Wrong" addresses contemporary socialists' claim that Jesus of Nazareth would be on their side today.

The problem with this hypothetical, Reed explained, is just that: It is hypothetical. Notions of socialism as it exists today did not exist in the age of Jesus. But for the sake of research, Reed entertained the question.

His answer?

"It isn't only 'No,' it's 'Hell no.'"

No words from Jesus alluded to socialism. In fact, a stronger argument can be made that Jesus' teachings favor a capitalist society. But "to assign either word to him is to limit him to a fraction of what he was and what he had to say," Reed said.

Concluding his presentation, Reed quipped, "Jesus doesn't take a stand on every current issue of 2024."

Following his day in the office, Reed joined staffers, along

with current and alumni interns, for an evening of America's pastime. The Great Lakes Loons, Midland's Minor League Baseball team, beat the Lake County Captains 4-3 after a ninth-inning double by center fielder Jake Vogel drove in two runs. Many interns failed to witness the game-deciding play, later confessing that they were too engrossed in conversation to follow the game! ■

**“Was Jesus a Socialist?
Why This Question Is
Being Asked Again, and
Why the Answer Is Almost
Always Wrong,”**



By Jessica Wyeth
Marketing Analyst

MACKINAC RESEARCH LOCKS IN STATE PRISON — EDUCATION PROGRAM —

Michigan's bleak 2025 budget includes one bright spot, thanks in part to Mackinac Center recommendations that will save taxpayer funds and enhance public safety.

Two years ago, the Mackinac Center for Public Policy received a two-year grant to study the best practices in education and workforce training in prisons. Ex-offenders who are employed after leaving prison are less likely to commit additional crimes, studies have shown. Inspired by a 2019 visit to the Michigan Department of Corrections' Vocational Village in Ionia, we built upon research about how to equip returning convicts for the workplace.

Our first report asked, "Are Education Programs in Prison Worth It?" The answer was a definite yes.

All methods of education and vocational training offered in prisons — adult basic education, high school equivalency, workforce training and college — produced positive results. Ex-offenders had higher employment rates, higher quarterly earnings and less recidivism. The report also

produced the first statistically significant estimates of return on investment: Every dollar that states invest in prison education returns between \$1.60 and \$3.10 in reduced future incarceration costs and employment benefits.

A longer version of our report appeared in the American Journal of Criminal Justice last October. That article has been mentioned in 90 news outlets thus far and quickly rocketed to the top 1% of almost 370,000 academic journal articles tracked by Altmetric. Our researchers conducted the largest meta-analysis ever, reviewing 750 research papers published over the course of four decades before winnowing them to the 78 with the most rigorous methodology.

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's executive budget for the Michigan Department of Corrections requested \$3.9 million in one-time funds to convert the Thumb Correctional Facility into the Thumb Educational Center — the first American prison dedicated entirely to education and vocational programming. The State Budget Office cited the academic article containing our research. In one



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silver lining to an otherwise dismal FY 2025 state budget, the Legislature provided that funding.

Our research has also built legislative momentum for restoring productivity credits (earned time) to Michigan prisoners. If lawmakers approve, prisoners who participate in and complete programs proven to reduce recidivism (such as education or vocational training) could receive up to 20% credit toward their earliest parole date. Upcoming Mackinac research shows that inmates are 14.4% more likely to opt for this programming in states with such incentives.

In June, I testified in support of the package (Senate bills 861-864) before the Senate Civil Rights, Judiciary, and Public Safety Committee. We are optimistic that the bills will reach the governor's desk for her signature before year's end. ■



By David Guenthner
*Vice President for
Government Affairs*



BY THE NUMBERS

12.7

The percentage point reduction
in recidivism for prisoners
taking college courses

205%

The return on investment for
taxpayer spending on vocational
training in prisons

\$16,908

Net economic benefit per
participant in a prison
college program

PLAYING THE LONG GAME

As political candidates campaign around Michigan, the Mackinac Center has been fielding questions from citizens eager to maximize the impact of their support. Many ask, “Should I give directly to candidates or continue to support organizations like the Mackinac Center?”

Here are some thoughts:

Giving is a highly personal decision that should be rewarding for you and the groups you support. With some planning, you can be sure your philanthropy achieves the impact you want.

To make a lasting impact on public policy, you must first change public opinion. When you change the beliefs of voters, politicians and political parties change with them. That’s where groups like the Mackinac Center come in.

We work to shift public opinion so that ideas become politically acceptable. This takes time, so we are all about the long game. We work to create an intellectual climate where the right people will do the right things in order to help Michigan grow and prosper today.

By “people,” I mean policymakers. It’s important to support candidates who align with your priorities. It’s more important to hold them accountable once they’re elected.

Things to consider:

- Politicians and political parties come and go. Their positions on issues can change. They can be voted out of power as easily as they are voted in.
- Wins and losses are never permanent. It’s important to pay attention to issues even in good times.

What does this mean for your philanthropic strategy?

Are you investing in the core issues that matter to you? Does your strategy address long-term needs and allow for short-term opportunities? Does it address charitable giving?

If so, you’re on the right track!

Many excellent organizations deserve support, in public policy and other areas. The Mackinac Center wouldn’t exist without the vision and financial support of thousands of generous philanthropists. We are deeply grateful. ■



By Elizabeth Posthumus
Director of Donor Communications