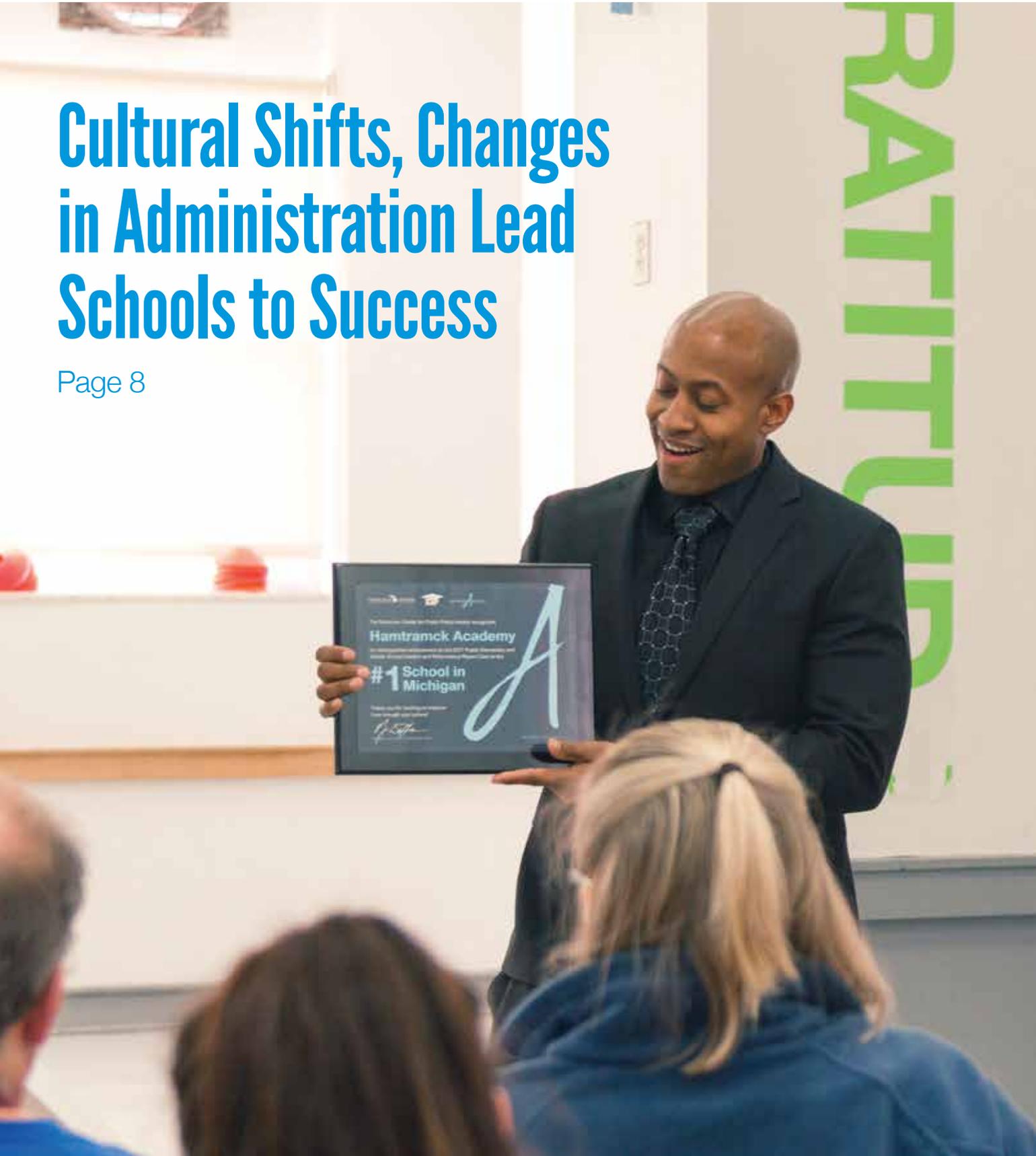


IMPACT

Cultural Shifts, Changes in Administration Lead Schools to Success

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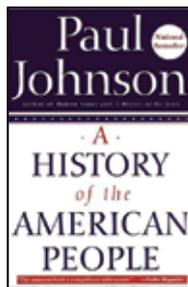
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BEN DEGROW RECOMMENDS

A History of the American People by Paul Johnson

At more than 1,000 pages, this epic tome requires quite a while to get through as it presents the history of America from colonial times to the end of the 20th century. But the time spent on the book was well worth it. I studied history in college, and I've often found historical books fall into one of two camps — overly critical of the subject, or overly flattering. Neither is my cup of tea. I want a book that lays out the good and the bad, with proper historical perspective, and sees people as the complicated individuals that they are. Johnson does a great job of this, and as an Englishman, he is fascinated with the uniqueness of American culture — a quality that came through clearly in his writing. It's a long book, but if you want a robust history of most of the important figures of the United States, this is a great one.



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"I'm just elated to have this recognition as being ranked No. 1 in the state by the Mackinac Center. It really dispels the myth that students that come from humble beginnings can't be high achievers."

— Hamtramck Academy Principal Alvin Ward, whose school ranked first on the latest Mackinac Center report card.

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When	Wednesday, June 20, 2018 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Where	Radisson at the Capitol Lansing, Michigan
RSVP	Friday, June 15

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Where	Aboard <i>The Islander</i> Bay City Boat Lines 1201 Evergreen Drive Bay City, MI 48706
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Tickets are \$50 for two guests.

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*Joseph G. Lehman*

The Perfect Time to Panic

A colleague returned from a strategy meeting in Lansing and reported signs of panic setting in. Some of our friends who depend on political victories for their livelihood are losing their nerve because the party that usually favors free markets faces strong political headwinds this year.

JOSEPH G. LEHMAN

I'm reminded of Buzz Lightyear and Sheriff Woody facing apparent doom in the 1995 movie "Toy Story." Buzz the heroic optimist admonishes Woody, "... This is no time to panic!" Woody flails his arms and shouts in defiance, "This is the perfect time to panic!"

Woody had a point, but his panicking didn't save the day. Historic patterns suggest this year's mid-term elections were always going to be tough for Republicans – and here are some more reasons why they are quaking.

At the top of the list is Donald J. Trump. For better and worse, and like it or not, any president is the face of his party for most voters, even for state-level elections. And this president is almost uniquely divisive for those on the left (and some on the right), and mercurial for all. The 2018 elections are shaping up as a referendum on DJT so anyone running as an "R" on the ballot, no matter where they stand on policy, will be treated by voters as a proxy for Trump. If the president is doing well at the time of the election, his party is likely to do well. But if he isn't, his party will likely do poorly. In this sense the Michigan elections will be nationalized.

The GOP is divided and some within it are demoralized. Not completely and not irreparably, but the situation seems new and unsettling to those with fewer years of experience in politics and those prone to short-term thinking.

A number of special elections around the country of late have produced Democratic victors or very strong performances by Democrats. Several Republican members of Congress who face competitive races are retiring rather than risking defeat. House Speaker Paul Ryan, one of the few politicians to produce a serious plan to control entitlement spending, will not seek re-election.

The political opposition is motivated and energized to a fever pitch. And in Michigan,

there is some level of plain old fatigue with nearly eight years of Republican control of the governor's office, both houses of the Legislature, the officially nonpartisan Supreme Court, plus the offices of secretary of state and attorney general.

Maybe all that sounds like Sheriff Woody's "perfect time to panic" for Republicans or those

who see the GOP as the best political vehicle at the moment for many desirable policy outcomes. But it's not. Consider this column to be a distant early warning to check the spread of panic from the inner circles of the political class to Mackinac Center supporters and others who put their trust in ideas. Panic, like pessimism, tends to bring about bad outcomes.

There are solid reasons for optimism. The strengthening economy is especially noticeable in Michigan. (The current national economic expansion, though weaker than others, is also the longest ever.) It's now almost too late for a recession to begin, and be recognized as such, before November. President Trump's support remains surprisingly strong in spite of his erratic behavior and speech. Many of his policies are helping the people he promised to help and they know it. Eight years of Republican control in Michigan is still producing remarkable policy results that help lift the entire state. Democrats are galvanized against Republicans but far from united behind anyone or anything.

As for us, if political insiders continue to panic, so what? They're not always right, as Trump's election so dramatically proved.

Why must a policy institute concern itself with political considerations? Because all policy moves through a political process. If the political environment changes, our approach may change. But our goals won't. Ideas are paramount, not politics, parties or personalities. No one who follows our work will confuse us with a reflexive defender or opponent of any particular political party. A party may shift to defense when it finds itself in the minority, but you can count on the Mackinac Center to stay on offense for free markets, limited government and individual liberty, no matter the party and no matter what. ■

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

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GENEVA RUPPERT WISE Editor

ILIA ANDERSON Designer

Mackinac Center Launches National Labor Effort

My Pay My Say will help workers across the country exercise their rights



The United States Supreme Court heard oral arguments in February on a case that could finally free public employees across the country from being forced to pay union dues. The argument by plaintiff Mark Janus, in *Janus v. AFSCME*, is simple but powerful: Government union activities are inherently political, and any requirement that someone support them as a condition of employment violates the First Amendment right to free speech. The court is expected to announce its decision in June.

Currently, almost 5 million public workers in the 22 states without a right-to-work law can be fired for refusing to pay union dues or agency fees to support union services. If the court rules in favor of Janus, these employees may finally have their First Amendment rights restored, along with the power to choose whether their unions receive any more money. The Mackinac Center believes that all workers deserve this opportunity. We believe that all workers should have a voice.

To help workers understand the issues, the Center has launched My Pay My Say, a national outreach

and education effort. Through it, we will educate concerned public employees about the potential impact of the case and how they may freely exercise any rights restored to them by the court's forthcoming ruling.

My Pay My Say will serve government workers by telling them the following truths:

- Public employees should not be pressured or threatened to pay a union as a condition of employment.
- Workers deserve a choice and a voice when it comes to union representation.
- Government unions operate in a politicized environment and should thus not be allowed to force employees to financially support them.
- Unions should not pressure workers to sign away constitutional rights that may be restored under a pro-Janus ruling.

To find out more about My Pay My Say, visit mypaymysay.com. ■



Thoughtful Giving



How to take control of your philanthropic engagement for a lasting impact

Molly Hunter Dobson is the epitome of a philanthropist. For most of her adult life, Molly has dedicated her time and resources to the betterment of her community. She has supported organizations that serve the Ann Arbor area and has been a longtime supporter of the Mackinac Center, dating back to 2001. After receiving a degree from the University of Michigan, Molly enlisted in the U.S. Navy, where she worked in communications.

Upon arriving home after her service in the late 1940s, Molly was acutely aware of the effects World War II had on our

country and decided to take action. She was raised in a home that encouraged people to give of themselves, and this philosophy encouraged her to get involved in philanthropy. Though she desired to help her community, she lacked the means to do so monetarily at the time. This did not discourage her, however.

Molly knew that while philanthropy involves financial support, it also requires people to give their time, knowledge and skills. Engaging in this nonfinancial form of philanthropy helped her deepen her convictions.

It also made her aware of her interests and passions, knowledge she then used to identify the impact she wanted her philanthropy to have. Consequently, her many years of service and philanthropic engagement have touched the lives of thousands. Because of her experience, Molly has received many awards and has even helped a program that trains young professionals in raising money. She has learned a lot about philanthropy over the years and has graciously agreed to share some reflections on how to become a thoughtful giver and increase one's philanthropic impact.

Q:

Molly, you've obviously been very involved in this world of philanthropy and you often talk about being a thoughtful giver. Could you share with me how you personally transitioned from being a giver to being a thoughtful giver?

A:

Well, I had certain convictions, but I didn't really ask more questions about how I wanted to spend my energy. When I had to add up my contributions for the year for tax purposes, it was interesting for me to see which directions I was going with my investments and which choices I made. Much later, when I was

more comfortable with being part of philanthropy, both as a donor and as a fundraiser, I realized that you can have so much energy and money, but you have to do some serious thinking about priorities. Much later in my life, I got involved with a program at the University of Michigan that served students who were interested in

working for nonprofits, and specifically, in development. It was called the Development Summer Internship Program and the class was about 20 students, and I got the chance to speak with them about fundraising. Participating in this program was another moment that got me to really ask myself, “What are your priorities? What do you care the most about?” This prompted me to become more thoughtful in my giving and to really define for myself what is important to me.

Q:

I like how you mentioned the importance of thinking about your priorities when it comes to giving and being a thoughtful giver. Why do you think this is an important component?

A:

I think it’s intelligent giving. If you don’t think about it, then by time the middle of the year gets here, the funds that you may have set aside for philanthropic purposes may be gone. I think you really need to think about what really matters to you, or if you find you really don’t have a priority, then maybe take three or four favorite directions and divide them in percentages for each direction. It should be intelligent, not casual or unplanned. I think maybe people forget that giving is a form of investment. We are now so inundated with requests that if you don’t take the time to think about how you allocate your funds, it could all be gone by January. So, you really have to think about the kind of impact you want to make and come up with a budget and priority process. Find out what you care most about and what is most important.

Q:

Would you say that determining what your philanthropic priorities are could help make a bigger impact as opposed to spreading your resources thin by supporting so many organizations?

A:

Oh yes, I suppose so, yes. I think that by choosing a direction with your investments, it impacts the world and it impacts your family. I can see how my son, for example, has been impacted by the way my husband and I have dealt with our giving. It sends a clear message about our priorities and a consistent message about how to give and why it’s important.

Q:

I agree with you completely and I do think giving is an interesting and tricky concept. Why do you think we give? Why is it an important practice?

A:

Well, hopefully we’re all interested in a better world, and if we’re not going to be part of the resolution and if others don’t make the same choices, we’re not going to get very far very fast. It’s fun when you can see the results of your gift. So often, you don’t get to see the results of your gift and when you get that chance it’s amazing. The world is full of problems, and we just need to be astute to tackle them and help resolve them the best we can.

Q:

You’re totally right. I’m curious, as someone who has invested their entire life to philanthropy, what kind of impact has it had on you personally?

A:

Well, I can see the results when I give locally, and that is very rewarding because if you’ve been a citizen for a long time, you know the needs and you know what matters to you. You’ve thought about your priorities and can be comfortable about making your decisions about gifting and you get to see firsthand the difference you’re making. I like to see how my habits and my husband’s – who was equally involved and very generous financially and with his talents – habits have influenced our son and how now our son teaches those habits to his kids. I like to see how the importance of giving is being passed down and to see how these lessons and examples are being absorbed; it’s like an echo. So, giving has taught me personally how it can influence your family, friends, and community.

Q:

Well Molly, I think you’ve shared some jewels of wisdom here so thank you for that. Do you have any last words you’d like to share or advice?

A:

I’ll just say this. Life is short, shorter than we like to think. What type of impact are you going to make? You have to really think about that. What are you going to do to make a difference? It’s so important, and it’s a question we all have to confront. ■

Cultural Shifts, Changes in Administration Lead Schools to Success

Numbers only begin to tell the story of some of the state's top schools, but the numbers on the Mackinac Center's report card don't lie.

It seemed entirely fitting, then, that the state's top school welcomed my colleague Ilia Anderson and me on a day that celebrated a well-known geometric ratio: Pi Day. We arrived at Hamtramck Academy just in time to witness a packed room of students

**BEN
DEGROW**

cheering as their peers planted cream pies into teachers' faces. In an earlier competition, a fifth-grade student had won an annual contest by reciting from memory 368 digits of pi.

An embrace of Pi Day reflects the values of a school whose math scores outpace the state's, especially at the higher grade levels, where test scores tend to decline. Hamtramck Academy's performance in other

subjects rates fairly well, too. But the fact that nearly all its students come from low-income families makes the results more dramatic.

The Mackinac Center's latest Context and Performance Report Card adjusted three years of state M-STEP scores for every public elementary and middle school in the state. It did so based on the rate of low-income students, as measured by how many students receive free lunch subsidies.



Ben DeGrow, director of education policy at the Mackinac Center, presents Alvin Ward, principal of Hamtramck Academy, with a certificate to honor the school's success.

The challenges associated with student poverty suggest that schools with a high concentration of poverty won't do as well on state tests, but some schools beat the statistical odds. That's how Hamtramck Academy, a National Heritage Academies charter

school, earned the top spot on our report card.

"I'm just elated to have this recognition as being ranked No. 1 in the state by the Mackinac Center," Principal Alvin Ward told us on our March 14 visit. "It really dispels

the myth that students that come from humble beginnings can't be high achievers."

The eye-opening finish of Dearborn Public Schools, with nearly three-fourths of its students in poverty, also upsets the myth. Five of the

10 highest CAP Scores on our new report card went to schools in the state's third-largest district. Half of the 30 Dearborn schools rated on our report card finished in the top 4 percent statewide. These numbers suggest that the district is doing something right.

The cause of Dearborn's success isn't entirely clear, but Superintendent Glenn Maleyko offered some possible keys. Perhaps the most unusual is the district's decision to manage schools within geographic zones rather than the grade levels they serve. Also key is a rigorous system that sends

administrators and master teachers into classrooms for frequent visits, giving them the chance to provide prompt and thorough feedback to teachers.

A high level of spending doesn't explain the district's success. Dearborn spends a little more



The staff at Hamtramck Academy.

than the average Michigan school district, \$12,000 a pupil. That's about 20 percent less than nearby Detroit Public Schools Community District, the nation's worst performer.

Interestingly, both Hamtramck Academy and Dearborn Public Schools educate very high shares of immigrant students who don't speak English as their first language. This fact does not factor into our report card, but it's something that may require further study.

Our report card this year added something new to the mix. Eight years of CAP Score data allowed us to see which schools are losing ground and which are on the upswing. A pair of Detroit schools that left

district management to become charter schools showed the greatest improvements in the state.

Right behind them, though, was rural Akron-Fairgrove Elementary in the state's Thumb region. After the school earned a negative label from the state, its leaders consulted with experts to revamp some basic strategies and started attracting back some families that had opted for other districts. Student achievement quickly progressed.

No grand state program or major funding increase launched the turnarounds in Akron-Fairgrove or in the metro Detroit area. Parent and community support have been crucial, as have school cultures that focus

on raising expectations for kids and working out those cultures through dedicated teachers and leaders.

In the end, the numbers tell us that the actions of these and other high-flying schools have paid off in giving many Michigan children a greater chance at success. ■

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

Lunch for Justice

How an hour-long conversation will result in Michigan becoming a national leader in validated forensic evidence

In January, the Mackinac Center hosted an Issues and Ideas Forum on the topic of forensic evidence, or the use of physical evidence obtained at a crime scene, such as trace chemicals and fingerprints. Poorly applied analysis, or forensic science, can mean that someone is wrongfully convicted of and sentenced for a crime. So, the panelists agreed, it's critical to enact policies that ensure transparency and

KAHRYN RILEY

quality control in crime labs. It's also important that courts do not admit evidence that is based on bad science.

The lunch event was very well attended by Mackinac Center friends and nontraditional allies, who learned that so far, 17 Michiganders have been exonerated after being wrongfully convicted on the basis of misapplied forensic science. Our speakers, Amshula Jayaram of the Innocence

Project, Lauren Krisai of the Reason Foundation and Julie Baumer, a wrongfully imprisoned woman, also met with local criminal justice reform advocates and stakeholders after the event. They used that occasion to explain how policy change and public education can keep innocent people out of prison.

These discussions have since blossomed into real change, with Jayaram educating lawmakers



Lauren Krisai, Julie Baumer and Amshula Jayaram discuss forensic science at an Issues and Ideas Forum earlier this year.

with Jarrett Skorup, the Mackinac Center's director of communications and marketing. The idea of creating a state-based forensic science commission, one of the most important ones put forth by the panel, is now in full motion. The commission could prevent wrongful convictions that result from the flawed use of forensics. It would do this by uniting some of Michigan's best research scientists and forensic science practitioners

with criminal justice stakeholders to review the evidence presented in our courtrooms and ensure that it is based on reliable, validated science.

The budget bills being discussed in both the House and Senate contain a placeholder provision that can soon be used to fund such a commission. When the commission is funded, it will be one of the best of its kind in the country and put Michigan in a position to show other states how to transform

the use of forensic science. A diverse coalition, including the ACLU and the Michigan Innocence Project, supports the proposal, and is working with lawmakers and representatives of the criminal justice system.

The progress underway on this important reform just goes to show what can happen when interested people who want to do the right thing decide to get together for lunch. ■

Kahryn Riley is a policy analyst at the Mackinac Center.

When We Pay Administrators to Lie to Us

Sometimes our public administrators act like private entities that seek to serve their own interests. They should be held to a higher standard, however. They are, after all, entrusted to serve the public interest, which makes the core of what government does different from other institutions. Hospital administrators, for instance, don't have to pretend to advocate for anything other than the interests of the hospital. But our public administrators should have the public interest in mind, even if it is against their own private interests.

It's understandable that public administrators become sympathetic to the programs they administer. Yet they can cross an important line when they evaluate their own effectiveness and go beyond simply reporting on what they do to instead engage in an effort to justify their existence. That's because public officials who overstate their impact and their effectiveness betray the public trust.

And these overstatements are more common than they should be.

The Michigan Economic Development Corporation, the state administrator for wasteful business subsidy programs, judges the effectiveness of its own taxpayer-paid tourism advertising campaign. It says, every year, that it provides huge returns, although Mackinac Center research has shown the returns are probably

miniscule, if not negative. So residents should be skeptical — it's in the agency's self-interest to make such claims.

JAMES HOHMAN

The state administers some taxpayer-sponsored preschool programs. The state Department of Education provides an evaluation of how effective these preschool programs are. It says that their participants do better on tests, but without a control group of nonparticipants to compare it to, the claim doesn't say much. The department does have at least one older evaluation that has stronger methods, though.

State lawmakers wanted school districts to reward good teachers, so they required administrators to evaluate teacher effectiveness and give extra pay to good teachers. Mackinac Center investigations have revealed that over a quarter of all districts rated every one of their teachers as effective in 2014.

Overstatements are different from promotional material. People should expect that an agency's press releases broadcast the good things its does. And it's fine to tell stories about the things public employees have done.

Self-interested attempts by an agency to show that its work is worth the public expense, on the other hand, are a different story. While its employees are public servants who may believe in the value of the services they provide,

they are hired to serve the public interest. Attempts to inflate their value should be met with disdain from the public in general and lawmakers in particular.

It is possible, despite the skepticism I've expressed so far, for government administrators to provide adequate evaluations of their activities. They can set up experiments, perform cost-benefit analyses and run other tests to check the effects of their operations. I trust the Michigan Department of Transportation's research reports, for example. They look and sound like honest attempts to assess how to do transportation better.

Also, the state auditor general provides evaluations of public expenditures that you can trust. But it is also an institution whose self-interest is to provide honest evaluations.

A department that attempts to save money and improve quality is a good thing. But some administrators seem to think they are in a contest with the public for taxpayer dollars, and they are happy to bend the truth to keep their funding. That is bad governance. Residents shouldn't pay for their public administrators to lie to them. Perhaps it's time for lawmakers to find ways to ensure that evaluations of public agencies are transparent and performed by organizations whose primary interest is gaining a reputation for honest evaluations. ■

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

True Story

Free markets and choice provide customers with better options

One way the Mackinac Center can advance its message of “improving the quality of life for all Michigan citizens by promoting sound solutions to state and local policy questions” is by taking part in discussions with other policy-focused groups. We had that opportunity at the recent American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) Spring Task Force meeting in Grand Rapids, which was held April 27. Mackinac’s Environmental Policy Initiative was invited to speak at the Energy, Environment, and Agriculture Task Force Luncheon as part of a panel that discussed electricity choice. The luncheon was sponsored by the Conservative Energy Network and featured three other panelists.

Michigan House Rep. John Reilly, R-Oakland Township, served as the panel’s moderator. He spoke on the importance of electricity choice to the state’s public schools and his bill (HB 4708) that would allow all K-12 schools in the state to purchase electricity from any provider they choose.

JASON HAYES

Glen Bolger, a Republican pollster and co-founder of Public Opinion Strategies, spoke on the results of a recent national poll on a variety of electricity issues, including electricity choice. Their polling found that “70 percent of voters would support an initiative to minimize regulation on the energy market and eliminate legal energy monopolies.”

Adrian Moore, The Reason Foundation’s vice president of policy, described his organization’s push to educate the American public about the ways that electricity choice improves system reliability, reduces costs and expands generation options.

Mackinac was asked to speak on the topic of electricity choice in Michigan. We covered the legislative history of electricity choice in the state, the economic impact of the 2008 re-regulation of choice, our proposals to expand choice and free the state’s electricity markets.

While time was limited for the presentation, it was still possible

to explain how, in 2000, Michigan deregulated its electricity markets and legally enfranchised residents with the right to choose their electricity provider. Back then, we could do so in much the same way we currently choose our cellular, internet or cable/satellite TV provider.

But, in 2008, the Michigan Legislature walked that decision back by reinstating the Michigan Public Service Commission’s oversight over monopoly utility pricing and re-regulating the state’s electricity markets. Their decision severely restricted electricity choice by guaranteeing 90 percent of retail electricity markets to a small group of monopoly utilities.

Only 10 percent of retail markets were allowed to remain in the choice market, and that market was almost immediately snapped up by public schools and industrial demand, meaning that no residential customers in Michigan actually have choice. That lack of choice continues to plague our markets today because the Legislature has frequently opted to defer action. For example, in December 2016,

Michigan passed Public Acts 341 and 342, which updated state electricity laws. A key argument behind the passage of these bills was that they were needed to maintain an affordable and reliable electrical grid in the state. Michigan's limited electricity choice market was, at least momentarily, protected in Michigan after a great deal of effort on the part of electricity choice's defenders.

But, as the graph of average total electric prices shows, Michigan's electricity rates, whether residential, commercial or industrial, are consistently higher than rates in either adjacent Great Lakes states, or across the nation. When we had electricity choice from 2000 to 2008, however, our rates were largely below those seen in Great Lakes states, or across the nation.

It's not surprising therefore, that Bolger's survey data shows 70 percent of voters would vote to cut regulations and disband legal energy monopolies if they were given the opportunity. Even official state reports say that as many as 28 percent of Michigan residents and businesses would opt for the improved customer service, better reliability and lower prices of the choice market if they could.

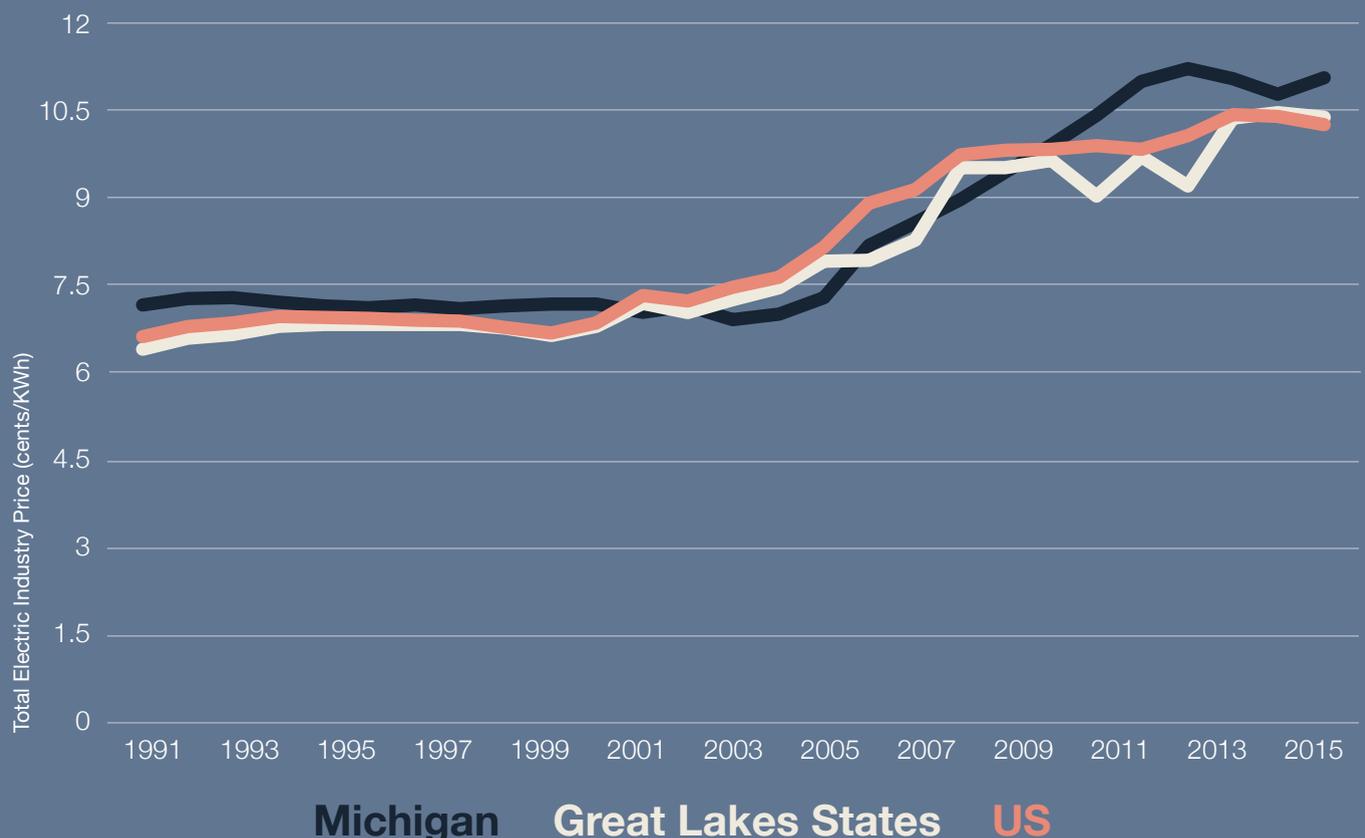
One of the challenges electricity choice advocates face is a lack of public knowledge about choice as an option. When choice was expanding in telephone and cable TV services, some were unaware that they could choose other options and some were unsure that another option would work well for them. They might not always be happy with their monopoly providers, but they were familiar with the services

those companies provided. When they learned they could have access to a better, more reliable service, as well as rapidly improving technologies, the majority of people gladly chose to move away from monopoly providers to a more free-market option.

Electricity choice exists in the same sort of space. It would work far better if the legislative cap on choice was removed and energy producers were allowed to compete with each other on a transparent, level playing field. It's our job to get the truth about electricity choice out to the public, media and elected officials. With your help, we will continue our work to explain the value of free markets and expanded options to electricity customers across the nation. ■

Jason Hayes is the director of environmental policy at the Mackinac Center.

Average Total Electrical Prices





Detroit's Young Entrepreneurs Have Another Chance to Shine at the 2018 DETROIT CHILDREN'S BUSINESS FAIR

We had another fun-filled day at the Third Annual Detroit Children's Business Fair this year!

The fair has grown exponentially each year, and this year we had over 30 businesses participating, selling everything from handmade tote bags to chips and salsa.

We had plenty of new and returning faces competing for prizes this year. The winners in each category are featured on the next page.

As fun as the prizes are, however, the most important part of the business fair is the atmosphere of creativity and energy generated by

dozens of kids learning and getting excited about entrepreneurship.

Not every child who participates in a business fair will go on to own and operate a business as an adult. But the fair is an opportunity to get a leg up on peers who have never had this kind of hands on experience. It isn't just about economics, sales, marketing or organization – business fairs build confidence and provide an opportunity for trial and error. Kids can learn about risk and reward in a safe space.

And the fair is just as meaningful for adults. It's hard not to be hopeful for the future of Michigan and Detroit after encountering so many bright

kids bent on improving their lives and their communities.

Detroit Children's Business Fairs are a joint effort. This year we are proud to have continued our work with Junior Achievement of Southeastern Michigan, and thankful for the sponsorship of America's Future Foundation, which generously donated prize money. And the Detroit Children's Business Fair would not have been possible without the hard work of Acton Academy, which created and distributed the model it is based on.

We can't wait to continue the fair next year! ■

Check out more photos at DetroitChildrensBusinessFair.com or look us up on Facebook: facebook.com/detroitchildrensbusinessfair



In the younger age group, **Reygan Lowery**, age 9, won the prize for presentation and creativity with her business **Totally Totes**. The high quality of her handmade messenger bags and purses spoke to her dedication to her business.



In the older age group, the prize for business potential went to **Emerson Tatum** for her business **Positive Vibes**. Selling art, jewelry and skincare designed to improve the well-being of her customers, Emerson earned her first place despite being among the youngest in her age group, at only 11.



In the older age group, **EenaARTS** won the prize for originality. Run by **Mena Nasiri**, age 13, EenaARTS has participated in all three of our business fairs, selling handmade jewelry and beautiful greeting cards. This is the first time she has won, however — the third time is the charm!



The prize for originality in the younger age group went to **Rocks in Jars**, run by 9 year old **Emmi Sirianni**. The judges were impressed by her drive and range of products, which included beaded jewelry.

The Winners!



In the older age group, the prize for presentation and creativity went to business fair veteran **Ceciley Boynton**, the 15-year-old owner of **Kraftabulous Kreations**. Last year, Ceciley won the prize for business potential, and her hard work impressed the judges again.



For business potential, **Aliya Farrand** took home the prize for her all-natural lip balm business **Lip a Dee Doo Dah**. Our judges appreciated not only her hard work and knowledge of her product, but also her clear and thorough understanding of microeconomics at the young age of 10.

Juvenile vs. Adult Justice

Forum discusses the differences

In February, the Mackinac Center hosted two experts in juvenile justice at an Issues & Ideas Forum in Lansing. The event, titled “Raising the Age: Should 17-Year-Olds be Eligible for Juvenile Justice in Michigan?” focused on an important debate taking place in the state Legislature.

Michigan is one of only five states (the others being Georgia, Missouri, Texas and Wisconsin) where 17-year-old offenders are not directed to the juvenile justice system. Instead, they are automatically prosecuted as and incarcerated with adults. Legislation has been introduced to transfer 17-year-olds to the Michigan juvenile justice system, but making this change may prove costly.

The guest speakers were Nila Bala of the R Street Institute in Washington, D.C., and Jason Smith of the Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency in Ann Arbor. Bala discussed why



conservatives should care about juvenile justice. “If your conservative philosophy is built on three pillars of compassion, public safety and controlled government spending, then the right answer would be to raise the age of criminal responsibility,” she explained. Putting youth in the juvenile system means they will end up at far less risk of physical or emotional abuse, will enter adulthood with a clean slate and will be 37 percent less likely to reoffend.

Smith agreed. “The juvenile justice system does a far better job of

connecting youth to other services and programs. I can attest to that as a former probation officer; I had a strong relationship with the community mental health provider, with the schools, with entire families.” He added that a recently completed study will help Michigan understand the cost of making the change. “Most stakeholders agree in concept with raising the age. ... This is a really great opportunity to work on gathering quality data to inform policy and practice and using evidence-based risk assessments to drive treatment planning.”

Raising the age would still allow prosecutors to waive youth accused of very serious crimes into the adult system. But it’s time for Michigan to join the other 45 states in bringing the age of adult criminal liability in line with the other rights and responsibilities of legal adulthood. ■

How States Can Lead Health Care Reform

Event identifies room for innovation and flexibility

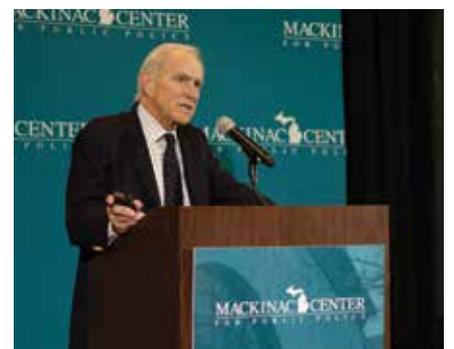
On March 14, the Mackinac Center hosted an Issues and Ideas Forum on state-led health care reform with Dr. Roger Stark, a policy analyst with the Washington Policy Center and retired medical doctor.

The federal government controls the behemoth that is health care regulation through rules about Medicaid, Medicare and the Affordable Care Act. But as Stark explained, even within the vast array of laws and regulations,

state have ways to experiment with new ideas, saving money and providing better care at the same time.

Stark noted that the ACA provides very little wiggle room for an administration to change the way the law is enforced, but it does have two waiver sections — one for states, and one for Medicaid.

Statewide waivers must be passed by the state Legislature, are limited in scope and must be cost-neutral. But



they can allow states to provide more options by, for example, encouraging high-deductible insurance plans that

come with health savings accounts. Waivers can also allow states to approve plans with more refined benefits (for example, allowing single men to purchase insurance that does not cover OB-GYN services).

But there is even more room for innovation with Medicaid waivers. Some states have instituted new rules for the program to move it back to the original goal – a social safety net. Medicaid, Stark said, “should be a bridge to individual insurance or to employer insurance.” States have tried

to move toward this goal by instituting work requirements, charging premiums and limiting the amount of time people can spend in the program.

There are a number of ways Michigan could reform its laws on health care, but Stark highlighted two he felt would be most helpful. The first is to eliminate Certificate of Need laws, which artificially limit the availability of medical care and equipment. The second is to cap by law the amount of money the state is willing to spend on the expanded Medicaid program.

Making health insurance more affordable and effective is a worthy goal. It’s also a powerful one because it is tied to many other policy areas the Mackinac Center addresses, including occupational licensing, government waste and fraud and individual liberty. You can see Stark’s full talk on our website, or find out more by reading his book: “The Patient-Centered Solution: Our Health Care Crisis, How It Happened, and How We Can Fix It.” ■

Why Michigan Should Hit the Brakes on Suspending Driver’s Licenses

Recent event shows why most suspensions hurt rather than help

In Michigan, it doesn’t take much to lose your driver’s license. Approximately one in 15 Michigan drivers had a suspended license in 2010, and over 95 percent of those suspensions had nothing to do with driving.

A recent Mackinac Center Issues and Ideas Forum, moderated by policy analyst Kahryn Riley, showed how this practice got so out of hand and why it should be reformed.

Panelist Evan Carter, a reporter for the Mackinac Center’s Michigan Capitol Confidential, discussed the state’s recently repealed “Bad Driver Tax,” – an early 2000s revenue generator for the state that resulted in thousands of suspensions.

James Craven studies criminal justice reform at the Reason Foundation and gave the highlights from his recent study: “Driver’s License Suspension Reform: The Right Road for Michigan.” The study catalogued all the different



reasons why the state has suspended licenses, from unpaid parking tickets to failing to appear in court.

“Almost any other solution would be better than suspending their driver’s license,” Craven said, pointing out that a person who loses the right to drive often then becomes unemployed. And a court is even less likely to collect money – say, a fine or child support – from someone who doesn’t have a job.

The third panelist was Kimberly Buddin-Crawford, policy counsel for the ACLU of Michigan. She told a few stories about her work with people who

had lost their driver’s license, including a young single mother in Detroit who lost her license because of some unpaid traffic citations. She kept driving because she had no other way to get to her job, which paid only \$700 a month. When she was pulled over again, she faced a \$600 fine for driving with a suspended license. Her judge told her she had three weeks to pay the fine or face an arrest warrant.

It makes sense to suspend the licenses of someone who commits a driving offense. Anyone who drives recklessly, is drunk at the wheel or speeds excessively needs to take a break from the road. But Michigan’s current policy on license suspensions is counterproductive and heavy-handed. It does not improve safety and disproportionately affects people living in poverty. The state should consider taking a more sensible and compassionate approach to enforcing its laws and judgments. ■

PAUL KENGOR REVIEWS

THE RISE AND FALL OF COMMUNISM

When the Bolsheviks seized control of Russia during World War I, the practical result of ideas laid out by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels began to take effect. For the next few decades, communism was on the march around the world, expanding across most of Eastern Europe, China, and large parts of Latin America and Africa.

Dr. Paul Kengor, a professor of political science at Grove City College in Pennsylvania, has studied the rise (and eventual fall) of communism. He came to Midland recently to speak to a full-house crowd of Mackinac Center supporters about the history of Marxism and the power of ideas.

Kengor explained communism, using the actual words of its proponents about the so-called need to eliminate private property and break down family units. Different varieties of communism were adopted in many countries around the world, including the Soviet Union, China, Cambodia and Cuba. Kengor also gave a lesson on



those who (unsuccessfully) promoted it in the United States and explained their tactics.

In the 1980s, communism around the world began collapsing, and Ronald Reagan in the U.S. and Margaret Thatcher in the U.K. won election and re-election. By the end of 1991, the Soviet Union was no more, the Cold War

was over and capitalism was widely seen as the winner. Today, few countries are still held tightly by the idea Marx had predicted would take over the world.

Despite this, Kengor warned, we shouldn't forget an ideology that directly lead to the deaths of at least 100 million people in the 20th Century.

That's an imperative at a time of economic fragmentation and when half the primary voters of one of our two major political parties are voting for a candidate openly campaigning for socialism. Freedom is not self-executing, and that's why the Mackinac Center will always be engaged in the war of ideas. ■



One Foot in Front of the Other

In the depths of her divorce, a friend once asked me how a libertarian would respond to a situation with no positive outcomes. It almost broke my heart to point out that liberty doesn't promise you will always have a good option. It only promises you will have options in your life, and that the opportunity to choose between bad outcomes is better than having no choice at all.

Good policy is vital because it creates an environment in which everyone is free to make the choices that best fit their own circumstances. That's what this column is all about — the way our personal lives benefit from aspiring to the ideals of freedom.

Unfortunately, people aren't the ideal. We do our best, but we also lie and cheat and steal. We make promises we can't or won't keep. We make unfounded accusations. We treat each other badly. And when that happens to me, I sometimes find it very hard to forgive. I'm sure I'm not the only one who has questioned my principles in the face of tragedy, or while nursing open wounds. A free and open society relies on trust, and trust is eroded when people behave badly.

But it is precisely because people are flawed that we need to be able to make our own decisions. And advocating for the ability to choose is as important when times are bad as it is when times are good — in our personal as well as our political lives. It just

doesn't provide much comfort when we deal with a new pain.

While trying to move past a problem, I can recommend prayer and meditation, or contemplating elaborate revenge fantasies. I may take a long walk in the woods or try to work up a sweat. Sometimes I'll go on a drive just to sing angry songs at the top of my lungs, or do some clumsy hammering on the piano to vent some feelings. But none of these tactics usually help with the problem at hand, since the solution is almost always perseverance.

In times of trouble, putting one uncertain foot in front of the other can be a form of torture rather than a comfort. But like physical therapy or breaking in a new pair of shoes, the pain pays off in the end. We aren't meant to stand still.

Nothing, including the intensity of a new pain or sorrow, lasts forever. For me, that is a reminder to savor the good times and keep going in the bad. There are always new communities to find, new passions to nurture and old ones to rebuild against all odds. As my divorcing friend eventually learned, there is almost always a light at the end of the tunnel. So as soon as you start moving, in any direction, things tend to seem a little better.

No one else can make a better decision about my future than I can. As I force myself to keep walking, I'm consoled by knowing I can choose my path. ■

BY THE NUMBERS RAISE THE AGE

37%

Juveniles are 37 percent less likely to reoffend when having their case handled in juvenile rather than adult court

3

Sources of heightened risk that youth face in prison: self-harm, suicide and assault by other inmates

8%

Percent of juvenile offenders nationwide whose crimes are minor/nonviolent, such as minor in possession and truancy

Build, Measure, Learn ... Invest

Many Mackinac Center donors I've met are engineers by training, and most engineers think about projects and philanthropic investments similarly. One example is a Mackinac donor, Harold, who told me, "Before I invest in 20 of something, I want to build one of something and make sure it works." Another example is Dick, who says, "I think about things in terms of solving giant problems. I want my investment to solve a giant problem."

Two Mackinac Center leaders, Joe Lehman and the late Joe Overton, worked as engineers, so the Center has a history of thinking about solving giant, long-term, systematic problems. We start by building a proof of concept. Most donors will invest in a proof of concept but want to see its results before making substantially larger gifts.

The latest proof of concept donors tested with us was a combination of strategies we deployed in summer 2017 to reform the state's school pension system. The key to the test was to stay on the offense, use several strategies and work with allies. Mackinac Center donors invested in strategies to get the right message to the right people at the right time. The proof of concept proved to be successful.

What do engineers do when the proof of concept works? They invest. That is what several donors did next. In fall 2017, several donors made what

were, by far, their largest commitments so that the Mackinac Center can be on permanent offense for other policy priorities.



**JIM
WALKER**

We had to be relentless to achieve pension reform, only succeeding on our third attempt. Thanks to the investments that you and others have made, we will be on offense, seeking to gain more ground for school choice and defending it when it is threatened. We'll also continue to lower barriers for entry into the workforce for Michigan citizens. Our priorities on occupational licensure and criminal justice reform are part of that effort. Of course, all Michigan citizens still deserve their promised tax cut, as well.

We have also convened a coalition of partner organizations to light up the exits for government union members who will have a new right after the U.S. Supreme Court rules in favor of Mark Janus, expected this June. People around the country are depending on the Mackinac Center to help them execute the proof of concept developed with opt-out campaigns after Michigan's right-to-work law went into effect in 2013.

Will you open a conversation with us about joining the effort to be on permanent offense for sound policy in Michigan and worker freedom across the USA? Call us at **989-631-0900** to learn more. ■

Jim Walker is vice president for advancement at the Mackinac Center.