Up for the count

Lawmakers are getting ready for U.S. Census, redistricting

By Tim Anderson

At its population peak, Detroit was home to 1.85 million people, making it the fifth largest city in the country in 1950. That figure marked the height of the Motor City’s population boom during the first part of the 20th century.

Fifty years later, estimates show that the U.S. 2000 Census could mean the culmination of a more recent trend in Detroit — plummeting population figures that might drop the city under one million residents for the first time since 1920.

No one is more aware of the consequences than Derrick Hale, who represents Detroit in the Michigan House and who experienced redistricting nine years ago as a staff member in the state Capitol.

“The Census is vitally important to Detroit,” says Rep. Hale, a Democrat. “The population increase or decline is tied to state and federal revenue the city can receive for services such as health care and roads. And it also determines political clout. If Detroit falls under a million, it will possibly lose one or two state representatives and possibly one state Senate seat. On the congressional level, a loss of numbers could shift the districts around in a dramatic way.”

Every newsletter Hale sends to constituents includes a reminder about the Census. He and other Detroit leaders recently shot television advertisements with one bottom-line message to residents: Be counted.

“The closer you get to the actual count, the full-court press will begin in terms of educating people about how important it is,” says Hale, noting that poor, urban areas have traditionally been undercounted in past U.S. Census reports.

Republican Gov. John Engler is leading a statewide initiative called Census 2000. Michigan will spend at least $450,000 to recruit workers and help “hard-to-count” populations fill out and return Census forms.

“All state agencies will be involved in promoting this effort through internal and external communication with their employees and the customers they serve,” Engler says. “I fully expect support from every member of the Legislature in this effort, as they understand the importance of securing the best Census count possible.”

Politically, the consequences of the Census are already being felt. Lawmakers are well aware of what effect this year’s population numbers and elections will have on redistricting — the arduous, often politically divisive task that will begin in 2001 based on the 2000 U.S. Census.

“How redistricting goes will be dependent on two things: the population and who has control of the Legislature, whether it’s going to be Democrats or Republicans,” Hale says.

Michigan Sen. William Schuette says the combination of an election year and redistricting inevitably has an effect on the work of state legislatures. “That’s going to happen; it’s a fact of life. It’s as old as the Republic,” says the Republican from Midland, who is chair of the Michigan Senate Reapportionment Committee.

Preparing for redistricting

Census questionnaires will be sent to people around the country in March, and non-respondents will begin getting knocks on their doors in April. By April 1, 2001, state legislatures will have the population data they need.
CHIP enrollment at nearly two million

Michigan and Minnesota were named to the 1999 honor roll of a study that measures states' economies and their potential for future development.

The Corporation for Enterprise Development, a nonprofit, Washington, D.C.-based research group, annually releases a Development Report Card for the States. The study grades states in three categories: performance, business vitality and development capacity. Ten states were named to the report card's honor roll for receiving either an A or a B in the three categories.

Michigan was given a B and Minnesota a B in the performance category, which takes into account such economic indicators as long-term and short-term employment growth, job quality, the number of working poor in a state, and poverty and unemployment rates.

The business vitality category measures the strength and diversity of companies in each state. Michigan and Minnesota were given Bs in this category. Development capacity measures the states' infrastructure and the current state of their education system and financial resources. Minnesota was given an A in this category, while Michigan received a B. Wisconsin also was given high grades, receiving As in the performance and development capacity categories. Nebraska was given a B in the performance category.

Room for improvement

The Midwestern region needs to do a better job of making sure knowledgeable, quality teachers are instructing children, according to Education Week's 2000 Quality Counts report.

The study considered states' methods of testing and assessing educators, the percentage of teachers who have degrees in the subject they teach, and the amount of professional support and training that teachers receive. Only four Midwestern states—Indiana, Ohio, Michigan and Nebraska—were given passing grades in the report. The seven other states in the region received either a D or an F.

Guaranteeing good service

If Iowa residents aren't satisfied with the work of three state agencies, they now have the chance to get their money back. The secretary of state's office and the departments of Transportation and Natural Resources are participating in the pilot program, which state officials hope improves customer service.

The departments will set time standards for work such as approving stormwater permits and delivering driver's licenses to customers, who, in turn, will judge whether the agencies provided satisfactory service. If they are not satisfied, Iowa residents can get their money back by writing a letter explaining how the services need to be improved.

States' use of the federal Children's Health Insurance Program has increased, with nearly two million children participating in the program between Oct. 1, 1998, and Sept. 30, 1999.

CHIP was approved by the Congress and President Bill Clinton in 1997. Its goal is to expand health insurance to children whose families earn too much to qualify for Medicaid, but do not have enough to afford private insurance.

A recently released report on the program shows that Ohio leads the Midwestern region in the number of children enrolled in CHIP. Its total enrollment over the recent year was 83,688, the fourth highest in the nation. New York had 521,301 children enrolled in the program. Other states' numbers were considerably less. Minnesota and North Dakota had 21 and 266 children enrolled, respectively, according to the report.

Employers who help accommodate the family needs of their workers will receive special recognition this year by the state of Illinois.

Illinois Gov. George Ryan recently announced the newly created Family Investment Awards, which will be presented by the Governor's Commission on the Status of Women. The award categories are Child/Elder Care, Parental Programs and Promotions, and Innovations and Insights.

"We are hopeful that those honored will provide leadership by example for other employers trying to meet the evolving challenges of employees and their families in today's workplace," Ryan says. "The commission will pay particular attention to employers who made great strides in incorporating these programs into their business atmosphere."

The awards will be presented by the governor and First Lady Lura Lynn Ryan at a special ceremony later this year.

The Governor's Commission on the Status of Women was created to address the issue of women's equality in both the private and public sector.

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Around the Region

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Boot camps scrutinized after death of 14-year-old

By Tim Anderson

On July 21, only a few days after she was placed in South Dakota's State Training School, 14-year-old Gina Score collapsed during a forced 2.7-mile run and died of heatstroke.

The tragedy resulted in a flurry of activity. Charges of manslaughter and child abuse were filed against two employees at the juvenile corrections facility. At the request of the South Dakota Corrections Department, the U.S. Justice Department studied conditions at the State Training School and issued a 51-page report to state officials. A legislative committee was formed to review operations at the state's juvenile corrections facilities. And people throughout South Dakota began asking a broader question that is being posed more and more throughout the country: Do boot camps work, and should they continue to be a part of the juvenile corrections system?

Rep. Pat Haley, a Democrat from Huron, believes last year's death was not an anomaly, but rather the disastrous result of a system that encourages a hostile environment between boot camp workers and juveniles.

"Boot camps are prone to abuse of children, and the abuse is rampant as far as I can tell," Haley says. He and some other legislators would like boot camps eliminated from the state's juvenile corrections programs. That is unlikely, however, because Republican Gov. Bill Janklow and a majority of South Dakota legislators believe the military-style program is an effective way of rehabilitating troubled youths.

In December, Janklow ordered the Department of Corrections to close the girls program at the State Training School in Plankinton, make improvements and relocate it to Custer. By moving to Custer, the girls program will be located in the same town where the governor believes successful corrections programs for juvenile boys — including a boot camp — are already in place. "As a whole, the boys in our Custer programs have experienced phenomenal success academically and, in many cases, personally," Janklow says.

In advance of the 2000 session, the Legislature's Juvenile Corrections Report Review Committee made several recommendations on how to improve the system. They included the following: provide juveniles with an ombudsman who would investigate complaints against staff, require medical training for all staff members working at correctional facilities, separate youths who have committed crimes from those who are runaways or cannot return home, and better monitor the use of force and restraints on children.

While supportive of many of the measures, Haley says none of them address the real problem: the boot camp concept itself. "When you compare boot camps to a variety of different kinds of treatment programs, boot camps are failures," Haley believes. "They have higher recidivism rates generally speaking; they do not lower costs as promised, and most states do not provide the aftercare necessary."

Views on the effectiveness of boot camps vary widely. Georgia, Arizona and Colorado have done away with their military-style programs.

"They [the juveniles in the boot camp] get intensive educational vocational training, a very disciplined, military-style physical training and a very regimented program," says Rodney Ahitow, Illinois deputy director of juvenile corrections. "We've had positive results from the boot camp so far."
Federal funds key to putting new rail system on fast track

By Tim Anderson

Proponents of bringing high speed rail to the Midwest say the project has picked up substantial regional momentum in the past few years. But for plans to move forward, excitement about the proposed new transportation system will have to reach Washington, D.C., this year. Federal dollars are needed to pay for a large part of the Midwest Regional Rail System, which calls for passenger trains traveling at speeds of up to 110 mph to connect several Midwestern cities in nine different states.

Decisions on two key legislative bills and 2001 appropriations for Amtrak will be made in 2000, all of which will go a long way in determining the future of high speed rail. Wisconsin Gov. Tommy Thompson, who has led efforts to bring high speed rail to the Midwest, says states like his would benefit greatly from an investment in the new transportation system.

“High speed passenger rail can provide the people of Wisconsin a safe, convenient and affordable means of travel, while helping bolster our burgeoning economy,” says Thompson, who also is chair of the Amtrak board of directors.

He has gathered support from 26 other governors who will ask the Bill Clinton administration and Congress to provide Amtrak with $989 million in the 2001 budget, the full funding level for the federally supported transportation organization. Some of that money, in turn, could be invested in the Midwest Regional Rail System.

Bills introduced in Congress also could deliver some of the money needed to buy the equipment and make the infrastructure improvements necessary to create a Midwestern high speed rail system. U.S. Sen. Frank Lautenberg of New Jersey is sponsoring the High Speed Rail Investment Act, which would give Amtrak the authority to sell $10 billion in high speed rail bonds over the next 10 years. A proposal by U.S. Sen. George Voinovich of Ohio would give states more flexibility in how they spend federal transportation money, including the ability to transfer highway and transit funds to Amtrak.

Midwestern states must seize this opportunity to secure federal funding by working together and lobbying as a persuasive coalition, says Terry Mulchahy, deputy director of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

Two regional groups have been leading collaborative high speed rail efforts thus far. The Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MWRRI) is composed of transportation leaders in nine Midwestern states. It has spent the last few years studying the feasibility of high speed rail and gathering support for the proposed system.

Another ongoing effort in the Midwest is being spearheaded by the High Speed Rail Task Force of the Midwestern Legislative Conference. This group of legislators has met regularly to discuss the future of passenger rail service in the region, and on Jan. 28, members of the task force traveled to Washington, D.C., to meet with transportation officials. This year, the task force is introducing its Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Compact to state legislatures in the Midwest. The agreement would commit participating states to cooperating in the development of passenger rail service in the Midwest.

“The federal government, in some ways, is waiting to see if there is any real interest among states [for high speed rail],” says Minnesota Sen. Sheila Kiscaden, chair of the task force. “We think the rail compact is one way that the states can demonstrate that we have strong interest in passenger rail improvements and in finding ways for our states to make that a reality.”

Like Thompson, Kiscaden believes an improved, more efficient rail service would benefit the Midwest. “We’ve come to think of this as trying to rebuild an interstate passenger system, much like we had federal leadership on building the interstate highway system,” the senator from Rochester adds.

Proponents of high speed rail believe the system will allow metropolitan areas to better handle projected population increases. Highway systems cannot handle much more traffic, and air travel is limited or almost nonexistent in some Midwestern cities, says Randall Wade, chair of the MWRRI and passenger rail implementation manager for the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

Under the MWRRI’s plan, the federal government would pay for 80 percent of the estimated $4 billion in capital it would cost to build the Midwest Regional Rail System. Participating states would then have to pay the remaining 20 percent. Capital expenditures would be used to improve the safety of railroad crossings, purchase new equipment, renovate tracks and install new signals.

While capital costs are significant, high speed rail’s operating revenues are expected to cover operating expenses. If all goes well, Wade says, more than 9.4 million people could be using high speed rail in the Midwest by 2010. The Midwest Regional Rail System would use Chicago as its hub and cover 3,000 miles of freight railroad lines. Stops would be made in several Midwestern state capitals and in every major metropolitan area. The new system would significantly cut existing Amtrak travel times. For example, a trip from Chicago to Omaha currently takes nine hours and 11 minutes. With a high speed train, the estimated time would be less than seven hours.

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Source: Midwest Regional Rail Initiative

Remarks: Midwest Regional Rail Initiative

Less time, more trips

The Midwest Regional Rail System would cut down on Amtrak travel times between cities and increase the frequency of daily trips between them. Here are some examples.

High speed passenger rail can provide the people of Wisconsin a safe, convenient and affordable means of travel, while helping bolster our burgeoning economy.

Gov. Tommy Thompson Wisconsin
Legislators join forces to impact federal farm policy

by Anne McCann

Capitalizing on the spirit of hope and optimism during the Christmas season, lawmakers from across the Plains states convened in Omaha, Neb., late last December to discuss the fate of family farms across the country. The purpose of the Midwest Farm Price Crisis Forum, according to South Dakota Rep. Roland Chicoine, was to coordinate efforts across state lines so that agricultural states can present a "united front" when they lobby Congress to change the current farm program.

"If each state went with a different message, [federal lawmakers] would be even more confused than ever," says Chicoine, a Democrat from Elk Point.

Chicoine and three of his South Dakota colleagues traveled to the Nebraska meeting during Christmas week last year to meet with 100 other state leaders from across the Midwest. They discussed how to positively change the direction of production agriculture. At issue was the Federal Agricultural Improvement and Reform (FAIR) Act of 1996, commonly known as the farm bill, which is up for reauthorization in 2002. Several state lawmakers and agricultural organizations have already started gearing up for what many see as the chance to actually rewrite the bill. By holding forums and hearings throughout the country, the groups hope to get input from those most affected by the federal legislation.

The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) is planning a series of "listening sessions" that will be conducted throughout the year at both its regional meetings and those of The Council of State Governments. The plan is to come up with a list of recommendations to present to Congress on how to change the farm bill and ultimately, the direction of U.S. farm policy.

The U.S. House Agriculture Committee has also recently announced that it will be hosting a series of farm policy hearings throughout the country this spring. Like NASDA, committee members are hoping to give farmers and other citizens the chance to improve U.S. farm policy — which many blame for the current economic crisis most farmers are facing.

At the core of U.S. farm policy are the federal programs established to support farm income and commodity prices. According to the Congressional Research Service however, under the 1996 farm bill, "agriculture policy shifted away from price stabilization through supply management to more market-oriented decision-making by farmers." The idea was to give farmers more responsibility for risk-management decisions in return for greater planting flexibility.

Critics had warned that this new system would not provide the necessary safety net in the event of low prices and some say they were proven correct when Asia and some former Soviet countries were hit with a financial crisis last year.

"If each state went with a different message, [federal lawmakers] would be even more confused than ever," says Chicoine, a Democrat from Elk Point.

Like many, Chicoine cites the current farm crisis on the often turbulent and unpredictable world economy. The economic crisis in Asia, where imports of U.S. products are typically high, hit the American agricultural sector particularly hard. Weak foreign demand of our agricultural products led to lower commodity prices and lower cash receipts for exports from American farmers.

But, Chicoine, who is farmer himself, feels that situations like this can be addressed during the reauthorization of the federal legislation.

"The farm bill puts a floor on commodity prices," he says. "When we lowered that floor, the commodities dropped right down to it. We have to raise [it] up to where the farmer can survive."

Chicoine and his colleagues are also concerned by what is happening with genetically modified agricultural products. Many countries, including those in the European Union, have recently expressed their reluctance or refusal to accept genetically-engineered products, like beef or milk, from the United States, for fear of health-related risks.

This baffles the South Dakota lawmaker.

“We’ve been eating genetically altered fruit, vegetables and milk for a long, long time and nobody has complained about it,” he says Chicoine. "All of a sudden, because farmers are getting involved in it, its bad."

“I always ask people, ‘Where do you think you get your seedless grapes and new tomatoes and potatoes? It’s all been genetically altered.”

Chicoine and others who attended the Nebraska forum recognize that federal farm policy must be addressed now, while there are still people in this country who want to farm.

"With the economy the way it is in this country, you can make so much more money doing anything but farming. Today, why would a father want his son to go into farming under these conditions?"

— Rep. Roland Chicoine, South Dakota

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"Today, why would a father want his son to go into farming under these conditions?"

“We’re hoping that we can rewrite the farm bill, he says of his trip to Nebraska. “If we don’t do something now, it will be too late two or three years down the road. We’ll lose a lot of young farmers.”
Education, not collection, is behind new line on tax forms

by Laura A. Tomaka

Have you kept a careful record of purchases made online or from mail-order catalogs? This year, before sitting down to prepare their state income tax forms, some Michigan residents may search a little harder than in the past to locate all those remote sales receipts. At least that’s what the state’s Treasury Department hopes.

The reason? A new line has been added to the state income tax form that asks for the amount of use tax (also known as the remote sales tax) owed on merchandise purchased from out-of-state sellers who did not collect a sales tax.

This is not a new form of taxation for Michigan residents — just a new way of collecting it. “We’ve had [the remote sales tax] since 1937, but not many individuals know about it,” says Bridget Medina, press secretary for the Michigan Treasury Department. In the past, Michigan, like the 44 other states, “years down the road it could be.”

“[This] law must be enforced to ensure a fair, competitive environment for our in-state Main Street retailers,” he told the newspaper. “It must also be enforced to ensure that our schools and local units of government receive critical funding.”

Searching for solutions

The Treasury Department estimates that about 2 percent of taxpayers have complied with the use tax law in past years.

According to Emmons, the Legislature has no interest in applying any new taxes to Internet sales. “Michigan never even entertained the idea,” she says. “It’s never, ever been a topic here. I am not interested in new taxes. I am interested in an equity for retail establishments in the state of Michigan.”

Other states have taken note of Michigan’s approach. In fact, Ohio — which is expected to lose $206 million in uncollected remote sales taxes during this fiscal year — will follow the lead of its neighbor to the north.

“We are very concerned about the lack of public awareness of use tax liability,” says Carol Bessey, Ohio’s deputy tax commissioner.

“We do plan next year to include a line of the income tax return — not really with the hopes that it will bring in large amounts or revenue, but from an education standpoint. We think it’s important that folks be aware that this responsibility exists.”

For all 45 states that rely on a sales tax, the tremendous growth of the Internet and electronic commerce raises a question about the viability of state sales tax systems.

Under the existing structure, can the state fairly and efficiently administer the collection of taxes from purchases made over the Internet?

Ohio Senate President Richard Finan believes that this question goes to the heart of the problem. “We have to be able to collect the sales tax,” argues the Republican from Cincinnati. “If we don’t, the sales tax will go down as a state revenue source. I don’t believe you can continue to have the Main Street businesses with a 6 or 7 percent disadvantage.”

And while Finan is supportive of adding the use tax line to the state income tax form, he ultimately views that approach, along with general public awareness campaigns, merely as “stop gap” measures.

He — like many state policymakers across the nation — advocates a voluntary “zero burden” system and believes that there are Internet retailers who would participate in such a program. Zero burden would utilize advanced information processing technologies to simplify the sales tax system for all businesses. States and local governments would be responsible for paying costs associated with the new computerized system.
to begin the redistricting process, which must be completed in a year’s time. So while state leaders make sure their constituents take part in the Census, they also are preparing themselves for reapportionment.

A Nebraska task force made up of senior legislators has been meeting since late last year on the subject. The committee is charged with making sure that the personnel and computer software needed to complete redistricting is in place, and it also is setting up guidelines and policies for the process.

“We want to be up and ready by September, so whenever the feds release preliminary data from the Census, we can move forward,” says Sen. George Coorsden, who is chair of the legislative task force.

In December, the Michigan House and the Senate passed a series of measures in advance of the redrawing of political boundaries. The bills deal with issues such as keeping congressional districts contiguous, trying to keep cities and counties within the same district, and determining how challenges to any legislative plan will be handled by the courts.

The most contentious issue, though, concerns exactly how the U.S. Census figures should be counted. Traditionally, the Census has used actual enumeration to count the population. The U.S. Department of Commerce wanted to change its approach this year and replace actual enumeration with statistical sampling, which some say would provide more accurate population numbers in undercounted urban and rural areas. But because of a U.S. Supreme Court decision, states will be provided with numbers based on both actual enumeration and statistical sampling. Each state will then choose which figures to use.

“No matter which set of numbers you use, you’re probably going to get blasted from the opposite camp, so it’s kind of a no-win situation,” says Gary Rudicil, senior computer systems analyst with the Iowa Legislative Service Bureau.

As of January, a plan in Michigan to use actual enumeration was still in a joint conference committee. “The question is whether a statistical sampling or a ‘guestimate’ of how many people live in a neighborhood is good enough,” Schuette says. “I don’t think it is, and I think it has the chance of defeating the goal of better counting underserved members of the population. It certainly doesn’t solve the problem of undercounting.”

Michigan Democrats claim Republicans in the House and Senate want to use actual enumeration for political gain.

“It is wrong to use 19th-century counting for a 21st-century Census,” says Michigan Rep. Laura Baird, a Democrat from Okemos, adding that actual enumeration would result in Census figures “far less accurate and less advantageous for our state.”

Nonpartisan reapportionment

The Nebraska Legislature is officially a nonpartisan body in which state senators don’t have party affiliations, but that doesn’t mean reapportionment always goes smoothly. In 1991, the Legislature’s original plan led to a lawsuit and a court order overturning the redistricting map.

Since then, the Common Cause of Nebraska — a political watchdog group — has pushed for laws that would create a nonpartisan redistricting task force and take much of the process out of the hands of the Legislature.

Several states have created reapportionment commissions in charge of developing new legislative and congressional boundaries. Governors and representatives from the states’ two legislative bodies usually serve on the commission. The size of the task force varies greatly from state to state. In Arkansas, only three people serve on the commission, while 18 members make up the redistricting task force in Missouri.

In Minnesota, a constitutional amendment has been proposed to create a seven-member redistricting commission that would be composed of the governor and three members from each legislative body. At least one of the representatives from the state’s two legislative bodies would have to be from a minority party. The commission would make the final decision on legislative and congressional redistricting.

In the past, Minnesota’s reapportionment maps have been stalled by gubernatorial vetoes and challenges in court. For example, the state’s 1991 congressional district plan was reviewed by the U.S. Supreme Court. And Minnesota’s eventual congressional redistricting map was drawn up by a panel of federal judges.

The constitutional amendment aims to ensure that redistricting can be completed successfully by the Minnesota Legislature.

Iowa has a unique reapportionment process in place. Prior to 1981 redistricting, in an attempt to reduce partisan bickering and ensure an equitable reapportionment, Iowa lawmakers agreed to give the state’s Legislative Service Bureau the task of redrawing political boundaries.

The bureau’s redistricting map is presented to the Iowa Legislature, which cannot make any changes to the plan. It must simply accept or reject the proposal. If rejected, the map goes back to the Legislative Service Bureau for a second and, if needed, a third time.

Only after the third map is rejected can the Legislature create its own redistricting proposal, which cannot be a piecemeal version of the previous plans offered by the Legislative Service Bureau.

“Our goal is to keep the districts as compact as possible and to get the population as close to the ideal size as you can,” Rudicil says. “We don’t look at any demographics, we don’t look at any incumbent information, and we don’t look at any partisan information.”

Other states have been hesitant to follow Iowa’s lead, including Nebraska.

“I believe very sincerely that the members of any legislative body are elected in a representative democracy to do their best for the people, and that redistricting in the open is the way to do it,” Coorsden says. “No secret meetings, no caucuses, no backroom meetings. We do it in front of God and everybody.”

Schuette agrees that redistricting — despite the political squabbling it can sometimes cause — should not be taken away from state legislatures.

“It goes right to the heart of our system,” he says. “I think it would be wrong to take it out of our hands. It should be our responsibility as elected officials.”

### Population in the Midwest

The following chart shows — in millions — 1990 U.S. Census numbers and 1999 estimates recently released by the federal government.

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<tr>
<th>State</th>
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Source: U.S. Census Bureau
World trade is big business in the Midwest

by Cindy Lackey

International trade has become an increasingly important component of the Midwest’s economy. Recognizing the economic potential of the export business, states are becoming more involved — both individually and cooperatively — with helping their farmers and businesses better reach lucrative, sometimes untapped international markets.

In the past, states have left the work of promoting international trade in the hands of the federal government, says Minnesota Sen. LeRoy Stumpf.

“That’s going to change,” the Democrat from Thief River Falls believes. “States have the opportunity they haven’t had years ago. They can establish markets for their products.”

Through trade promotion policies, for example, state officials can open profitable, unexplored markets. By recruiting foreign direct investment, they can use new capital sources. By providing technical assistance resources to local companies, states can ensure that the business community takes advantage of growth opportunities in the world market.

Numbers from the U.S. Census Bureau demonstrate just how much the Midwest is involved in international trade. As of the third quarter of 1999, exports by Midwest companies valued more than $100 billion. Illinois, Michigan and Ohio all ranked near the top in the nation in terms of the value of their exports. Between 1993 and 1998, the value of Illinois and Michigan exports grew by more than $13 billion.

Midwestern states also benefit form investments by U.S. affiliates of foreign companies. In 1997, foreign direct investment valued $143 billion for the region and accounted for more than one million jobs. These companies accounted for more than 3 percent of total jobs in most Midwestern states, with a high of 5.1 percent of total jobs in Indiana.

The Midwest particularly relies on international agricultural trade. For example, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, more than half of the wheat produced in the United States usually goes into the export market.

Even in fiscal year 1998 — when exports fell to the lowest level in four years, largely due to the Asian economic downturn — one-quarter of U.S. agriculture production was shipped overseas, and the export value still was nearly $10 billion above any year prior to 1995. Agricultural exports currently support 750,000 American jobs on and off the farm, the USDA reports.

Working together

The Council of State Governments recently hosted a series of conference calls among state trade directors to talk about some of their innovative international trade practices.

During those calls, Kansas and South Dakota officials offered two examples of how states can facilitate trade and investment. The Kansas Department of Commerce and Housing uses and editorial marketing campaign to promote state exports and to attract foreign investors to the state. The department recently hosted a delegation of 23 German aviation journalists, who were recruited through contacts that the department’s staff, made at a Kansas pavilion in Europe last year.

The department’s spent about $2,000 for the day’s events. Already, a half-page editorial article on Kansas aviation appeared in the Frankfurt. “That’s an excellent return on investment,” says Michael Farmer, Kansas director of trade development. “A half-page in the same paper would have been $18,000.”

Realizing that the Internet provides companies with an effective way to promote their products to the world, the South Dakota International Business Institute launched the Web Page Development Project. The initiative intends to make sure that every South Dakota company in the exporting business is properly promoted in cyberspace. As of October 1999, about 75 percent of the state’s exporting companies had a Web page.

Regional cooperation

Midwestern states have many similar products, and cooperating to promote and sell those goods abroad is more efficient and cost-effective than if each state works alone, says Stumpf. The Minnesota senator co-chairs the Midwestern Legislative Conference’s Midwestern-Canada Relations Committee, which was created in 1991 and is composed of legislators from the 11 Midwestern states. Provincial leaders from Manitoba, Ontario and Saskatchewan participate in the committee’s meetings.

Together, they study issues such as the implications of the North American Free Trade Agreement for states and provinces, methods to simplify border crossings for tourism and commercial activities, and the authority of states and provinces to enter into international agreements.

North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota recently worked with the neighboring Canadian provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba to host the Northern Plains Producer Conference, which was titled “On the Common Ground.” The conference included 40 to 50 agriculture producers from each jurisdiction. The producers made recommendations on how government officials can address agricultural problems and facilitate opportunities for more cooperation and trade.

In another joint effort, six Midwestern states (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Minnesota) share foreign offices through the Council of Lakes Governors. The states opened their first joint efforts in Toronto in 1990 and now have bureaus in Sao Paulo, Brazil; Santiago, Chile; Johannesburg, South Africa; and Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Trade representatives from three to six states work in each office. The cost of each joint office is shared equally by the participating states, which together take part in trade shows and missions around the world.

One key to promoting international trade is the effectiveness of the partnership between states and their businesses. The Indiana Department of Commerce’s International Trade Division tracks that relationship with a software program designed to organize the state’s clients and measure progress of the partnership.

The trade division’s goals include the following: the number of small- and medium-sized Indiana manufacturers it assists, increasing the business community’s use of the state’s foreign trade offices, and maintaining a monthly average number of clients who have been helped by the services.

“We’re enablers; we can count a success if we help a business come to the realization that it shouldn’t be looking at the market just as much as when we help a business actually export something,” says Carlos Barbera, director of the state’s International Trade Division. As of August 1999, the division had enrolled 261 new businesses as clients for the year and was on track to have 2,000 by the beginning of 2000.

CSG released a report last month regarding individual states’ best international trade practices and regional cooperative efforts. For information on the report, An Assessment of States’ International Capacity, call 606/244-8163.
By Indiana Lt. Gov. Joseph E. Kernan

1999 was an extremely difficult year for farmers in the United States. As you can imagine, with our state’s traditionally strong agricultural industry, it was a year many Indiana farmers would soon like to forget.

It began with the lowest pork prices in 60 years. It continued with other commodity and livestock market prices falling below the cost of production. And adding to farmers’ woes in 1999: drought conditions that plagued much of the state.

As lieutenant governor, I serve as Indiana’s commissioner of agriculture. The state does not have a Department of Agriculture; rather, the Office of the Commissioner of Agriculture is our lead agricultural agency.

During the 1999 farm crisis, our agricultural producers looked to the state for guidance and assistance as they tried to tackle their financial difficulties. We responded quickly — just after the first of the year — by establishing the Agricultural Crisis Working Group.

The working group, which I co-chair with Purdue University dean of agriculture Victor L. Lechtenberg, was created with the goal of addressing the low market prices for Indiana agricultural commodities and finding solutions to improve them.

The 50-member group is a coalition of local, state and federal government leaders, producers, representatives of agribusinesses and universities, members of the banking community, and leaders from Indiana commodity and farm organizations.

Our initial recommendations were announced in March and included the reactivation of the Indiana treasurer’s Agricultural Loan Program, which provides $100 million in low interest loans to producers for fiscal years 1999 and 2000.

The Agricultural Crisis Working Group also developed a comprehensive set of state and federal initiatives to assist Indiana farmers — ideas that could be adapted for use in other states. Dean Lechtenberg and I led a 19-member agricultural delegation to Washington, D.C., last fall to hand-deliver the following proposals to our elected officials and government representatives.

• Develop and expand the Indiana Development Finance Authority’s Guaranteed Farm Loan Program and reinstate the Aggie Bond Program.

• Modify the Agricultural Loan Program to meet the objectives for loaning $100 million to producers in 1999 and 2000.

• Convene an Agricultural Market Development Task Force to expand the movement of Indiana agricultural products into domestic and foreign markets. The Indiana Department of Commerce’s International Trade Division and the Office of the Commissioner of Agriculture will head the task force, with representation from private companies and organizations, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Foreign Agricultural Service and the Mid-America International Agri-Trade Council.

• Increase the utilization of the Foreign Agricultural Service and the Mid-America International Agri-Trade Council to move Indiana’s generic and branded products to export markets.

• Establish an Agricultural Transition Task Force headed by the Indiana Department of Workforce Development to assist farmers in their pursuit of off-the-farm employment opportunities. The task force should also include representatives from the Family and Social Services Agency, the Farm Counseling Project, Ivy Tech State College, the Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service, the USDA-Farm Service Agency and the Office of the Commissioner of Agriculture.

• Enhance the flexibility of Indiana Department of Workforce Development training programs to develop a stable workforce that keeps agricultural and food processing facilities in the state.

• Utilize the Farm Counseling Project to meet the additional financial and psychological counseling needs and requirements of Indiana producers.

• Partner with state colleges and universities to develop and enhance services and educational programs for Indiana producers impacted by the agricultural crisis.

• Continue efforts to reduce the property tax burden on Indiana farm families.

• Develop performance-based animal agriculture regulations that protect the environment and, at the same time, maintain a viable livestock and poultry industry in the state of Indiana.

Looking ahead

Bolstering foreign trade is one of the most important goals of the initiatives. Exporting goods helps farms turn a profit and can protect companies from sudden downturns in the local economy.

Indiana got a boost in its export efforts last year when the USDA chose Indianapolis for its World Trade Organization listening session. The session’s focus was agriculture, namely how to expand markets and reduce trade barriers for U.S. and Indiana agricultural products.

The event could not have come at a better time. Our farmers, producers and agribusinesses were given a chance to share their firsthand stories of distress with individuals from the USDA and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative.

While low market prices were farmers’ primary concern in 1999, drought conditions in over two-thirds of Indiana’s 92 counties presented even more challenges. State and federal government agencies in Indiana worked closely with Indiana Gov. Frank O’Bannon to request a federal disaster designation for the state from the USDA, further opening federal low interest loans to farmers.

Good news was hard to come by last year. Fortunately for our farmers, 2000 is starting off on the right foot. A Purdue University agricultural economist recently announced that “profit” will once again be a common word in our pork producers’ vocabulary.

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No matter what this year holds in terms of agriculture, we are prepared. The Agricultural Crisis Working Group was established with the farm crisis of 1999 in mind, but it is now a permanent organization on call to help when the next important issue surfaces.

The key to its success has been the outstanding cooperation between so many different facets of the agricultural economy and their agreement that Indiana’s 66,000 farm families are critical to the continued success of our local communities and our state.

Joe Kernan, a Democrat, has been Indiana’s lieutenant governor and commissioner of agriculture since 1996. He previously served as the mayor of South Bend, Ind. If you have any questions about the Agricultural Crisis Working Group, please contact the Indiana Office of the Commissioner of Agriculture at 317/232-8770.

A forum for legislators and constitutional officers

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CSG MIDWEST NEWS

CSG takes part in Michigan Bipartisan Retreat


CSG Midwest — in cooperation with the Michigan House’s Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development (BILLD) alumni — presented nationally known speaker Arch Lustberg.

Lustberg has coached presidential appointees, congressional leaders and heads of corporations on public speaking and media relations. He is a regular presenter at the annual BILLD program. At the retreat, Lustberg demonstrated to legislators how they can communicate effectively with their constituents and the media.

The purpose of the retreat was to foster good working relationships between Republicans and Democrats in the Michigan House.

CSG Midwest participated in the event as part of its efforts to bring professional development opportunities to individual states.

Improved Web site is up and running

CSG Midwest’s new and improved Web site is now up and running. The redesigned site provides easier access to information about the programs, services and products available through the Midwestern office.

The Web address is www.csgmidwest.org. Past issues of Stateline Midwest and Firstline Midwest along with reports published by the office are now available online.

Midwestern state officials and their staff can now submit research requests and sign up for upcoming CSG meetings on the Internet.

The Web site also provides direct access to CSG’s national resources, including the STARS database, the online store and StatesNews.

Calendar

Upcoming Midwestern Legislative Conference and Council of State Governments events

- Application Deadline for 6th Annual Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development (BILLD) Program
  April 3, 2000

- CSG Spring National Committee Meetings
  April 26–30, 2000 (Napa Valley, California)

- 6th Annual Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development (BILLD)
  July 7–11, 2000 (Madison, Wisconsin)

- 55th Annual Meeting of the Midwestern Legislative Conference
  August 6–9, 2000 (Minneapolis, Minnesota)

State visits continue

The Midwestern Office of The Council of State Governments will continue its annual round of trips to state capitals in March.

Staff members Anne McCann and Laura Kliever will visit Madison, Wis., on March 14 and 15. Laura Tomaka and Ilene Grossman will travel to Columbus, Ohio, on March 15 and 16, and Cindy Andrews and Mike McCabe will be in Springfield, Ill., on March 28 and 29. Several other states already have been visited this year.

The purpose of the trips is to introduce legislators to the services provided by CSG Midwest. Anyone who would like to set up an appointment to meet CSG staff is asked to call 630/810-0210.

Application deadline nears

The deadline to apply for the 6th Annual Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development is April 3.

The program is designed to help new legislators develop the skills they need to become effective leaders in state government. BILLD is produced by the Midwestern Legislative Conference in cooperation with the University of Wisconsin’s La Follette Institute of Public Affairs. This year’s BILLD program will be held July 7-11 in Madison, Wis.

Each year, a class of 33 BILLD Fellows is selected through a competitive application process administered by the MLC’s BILLD Steering Committee. For information on BILLD or to request an application, call Laura Tomaka in the CSG Midwestern Office at 630/810-0210.

Task force travels to D.C.

Members of the MLC High Speed Rail Task Force met in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 28 with the transportation staff of several Midwestern congressional leaders.

The meeting was held to brief federal officials on the increasing regional support for a high speed rail system. Among the topics discussed was the task force’s Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Compact, which will be introduced in several states this year. The compact calls for states to work together and help promote an improved passenger rail service in the Midwest. For information on the High Speed Rail Task Force or the compact, call Laura Kliever at 630/810-0210.

— Page compiled by Tim Anderson

By Tim Anderson

Kansas Rep. Jim Garner’s journey into politics began on an old country road connecting his hometown of Coffeyville with the county seat of Independence. Between the two towns was the dilapidated site of the since-closed “country poor farm,” where Garner’s grandfather made a point of stopping the car and giving his young grand- son a powerful lesson in government.

“There I was, this 10- or 11-year-old kid, and it really had a lasting impact on me,” Garner recalls. “My grandfather told me, ‘That was where old poor people used to go when they couldn’t work anymore, and Social Security has changed that.’ He wanted me to be aware of it and make sure it never happened again.’

The seed for a life in politics had been planted in Garner. And by the age of 27, in 1990, the Coffeyville resident had been elected to serve his hometown and the surrounding legislative district in the Kansas House of Representatives.

“Getting involved in government was always something I wanted to do, but I thought I would do it later in life,” Garner says. “But when I got home to Coffeyville [after going to law school and serving as a clerk for a federal judge], the guy who was state representative at the time switched parties in the middle of his term. That irritated many people in my hometown, and they were looking for a Democratic candidate to run. They asked me to do it. I thought, ‘Sure, it’s an opportunity; I’ll try it.’ And lo and behold, I won.”

He has since become one of the most respected and influential legislators in the state, currently serving as Democratic House minority leader.

The 2000 agenda

Garner has big plans for the 2000 session, in which he believes the Legislature must address the needs of Kansas’ elderly residents, schools, and farmers. In many ways, Garner says, his southeast Kansas legislative district mirrors that of the rest of the state. The district’s population is getting older, local schools are having trouble paying their teachers and funding technology improvements, and farmers are struggling in an otherwise booming economy.

Discussions are expected this session on the state’s funding of in-home services for the elderly and the possibility of a state prescription drug assistance program.

“I’m eager and ready to engage in a debate, because I think there is definitely a need for those programs,” Garner says. “The state can improve the quality of life and keep people in their homes and connected with their own communities.”

Meanwhile, the state must address the fact that Kansas schools have fallen behind those in other regions when it comes to providing technology in the classroom, Garner adds. Finally, the survivability of family farms and how the state can help must be studied in 2000, he says.

Garner believes government should actively help Kansans in areas such as farming, health care and education, but also recognizes its limits. The first part of his philosophy was handed down from his grandfather, who credited Franklin Roosevelt with helping the Garner family at a time when they “didn’t know when the next meal was coming.”

“To hear my grandfather talk, God was spelled FDR,” Garner jokes. He got a different political perspective while attending Coffeyville Community College and the University of Kansas in the 1980s, a decade dominated by President Ronald Reagan’s philosophy of limited government.

“Government can’t solve all of our problems and it shouldn’t,” Garner says. “But I think there is a proper role for making sure that everyone has the opportunity to make the most of their talents. Government has to make sure the opportunity is there, that the artificial barriers are torn down, and that people have the chance to succeed or fail on a fair playing field. And I think there’s a role for government to have in making sure families have the tools they need to succeed — things like good schools, safe neighborhoods and access to quality health care.”

Minority leadership

Garner’s first formal foray into politics came in high school when he worked on the campaign of state Sen. Mike Johnston, who served for a time as Democratic minority leader in the Kansas Senate. Now, Garner finds himself as the leading Democrat in the House, where his party’s caucus makes up only 48 of the 125 members.

“The minority party can identify problems that are not being addressed or are being neglected, shine a light on them and hopefully move the majority to the direction of helping solve the problems,” Garner says. “This caucus has been very successful in that regard. We have many talented, smart people that make up for our lack of numbers. We come up with good ideas and then sell them to the people.”

He proudly points to the children’s health trust fund — which was created last year with money from the settlement with tobacco companies — as an example of what a minority caucus can accomplish. “Our caucus made [passage of the] trust fund for children’s programs one of our top priorities last session,” Garner notes. “We built coalitions with Republicans and were able to get that accomplished.”

Along with serving as minority leader, Garner also is a member of the House and Senate’s joint Legislative Coordinating Council. In 1995, he became a member of the inaugural Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development (BILLD) class, a leadership training program offered by the Council of State Governments’ Midwestern Legislative Conference.

As much as Garner likes the challenge of being minority leader, he wouldn’t mind serving with some more fellow Democrats in the House. He has been working around the state in preparation for the November 2000 elections and would like the chance someday to serve as House majority leader.

In the meantime, he hopes to continue serving Coffeyville and the rest of his legislative district — an area he has lived in nearly all of his life but only really got to know intimately after running for political office in 1990.

He describes the district as working class, with the trade center of Coffeyville surrounded by rural townships. Garner has lived through his district’s tough economic times in the late 1980s, when the oil industry hit hard times, and has seen the promise of the new economy, which brought Coffeyville jobs when amazon.com chose the town as its Midwest distribution center.

While the district’s economy has improved, Garner says, plenty still needs to be done on issues such as health care, agriculture and education — and he hopes this year’s session will produce renewed state efforts in those areas. 
**Proposing adoption**

Nebraska is sponsoring a series of ads aimed at encouraging families to adopt and to take part in the state’s foster care program. According to the *Omaha World-Herald*, the TV and radio ads are being produced with the help of the Nebraska Broadcasters Association.

The state will spend about $40,000 to run the television and radio advertisements. Nebraska currently has about 120 children 8 years of age and older who are looking for permanent homes, the newspaper reports.

**Stopping problem gambling**

Indiana will spend $875,000 this year for a program aimed at controlling problem gambling in the state. According to *The Indianapolis Star*, the initiative will be funded by tax revenues generated from riverboat casinos.

Problem gambling prevention programs will be developed in each of the state’s 92 counties. In 1998, people in Indiana lost $1.8 billion in gambling-related activities, which range from bets made at riverboat casinos and horse tracks to participation in charity bingo games and the state’s lottery, the newspaper reports.

**Dual speakership proposed**

Republicans in the Ohio House of Representatives have proposed a tandem speakership for 2001-02, a system that has never been used in the state’s legislative history.

According to the plan, Republican Rep. Bill Harris of Ashland would serve as speaker in 2001 and Republican Rep. Larry Householder of New Lexington would have the position in 2002.

According to the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, the arrangement is designed to subdue rivalries within the GOP and allow Republicans to focus on re-election efforts.

Current Speaker of the House Jo Ann Davidson of Reynoldsburg must vacate her seat by Dec. 31 because of term limits. The tandem speakership proposal will have to be approved by House members elected in November.

**Panel on health convenes**

North Dakota Democratic Attorney General Heidi Heitkamp has appointed a panel of health experts to develop a plan on how the state should use money from the settlement with tobacco companies. In 1999, the Legislature agreed to set aside 10 percent of the money for health-related initiatives and earmarked the remaining 90 percent for either water projects or school improvements.

Heitkamp told *The (Fargo) Forum* that the panel—which includes physicians and leaders of various health organizations in the state—will focus on developing programs that will prevent more tobacco use and will help people stop smoking. The panel is expected to develop a proposal in time for the 2001 legislative session.

**A case of too much work**

An increase in the number of court cases in Minnesota and a shortage of judges will likely lead to delays in the state’s court system, according to the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*.

The Legislature has been asked by Supreme Court Chief Justice Kathleen Blatz to provide the judiciary branch with money to pay for more judges and unanticipated increases in health insurance costs.

In the 1990s, the number of cases in the Minnesota court system increased 41 percent. In 1999, the Legislature approved judicial pay raises and agreed to hire 13 new trial court judges. Despite these moves, though, the state’s judicial system still faces likely delays in civil court cases and a budget shortfall unless more funding is approved, Blatz says.

**The Stateline**

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