



Midwestern Governors Association

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## ***Midwest Elects New Governor; Re-Elects Current MGA Members***

Jeremiah "Jay" Nixon, the longest-serving attorney general in Missouri history, won the state's gubernatorial race on Nov. 4. Nixon will be sworn-in as the 55th governor of Missouri on Jan. 12. Nixon will be the only new governor in the MGA following this year's elections. [Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels](#) and [North Dakota Gov. John Hoeven](#) were both re-elected to office.



During the campaign, Nixon focused on increasing access to quality health care and investing in jobs. He also focused on college affordability for the middle class through the creation of his "Missouri Promise" initiative. The initiative expands on the state's current A+ program by allowing all students who successfully complete community college or technical school attend a four-year state college or university tuition free. In order to qualify for the program, the student must meet academic, financial and community service requirements, as well as avoidance of disciplinary action. A+ currently covers about half of Missouri students.

Nixon has served as Missouri's 40th attorney general since first being elected to the office in 1992. During his tenure, he created the Agriculture and Environment Division to enforce Missouri's environmental laws and protect agricultural productivity. This division's actions have led to the cleanup of polluted sites and millions of dollars collected by the state. Prior to becoming attorney general, Nixon was commended for his environmental work during the six years he served as a state senator.

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## ***MGA Alumni: Johanns Wins Senate Bid***

Midwestern governors have a long tradition of extending their service to their states and the country after leaving the governor's office. Senator-elect Mike Johanns of Nebraska becomes the newest member of Congress to also have been a member of the MGA. After serving six years as governor of Nebraska, Johanns was tapped by President George W. Bush as U.S. secretary of agriculture in 2005. In 2002, Johanns served as MGA chair and was instrumental in strengthening the organization.



Johanns joins Senators Evan Bayh, Kit Bond (MGA chair in 1977 and 1983), Ben Nelson (MGA chair in 1994) and George Voinovich (MGA chair in 1991) as former MGA members now serving in Congress. Current U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Ed Schafer also was a former member of MGA, serving as governor of North Dakota from 1992-2000 and as MGA chair in 1995.

## ***Helping Rural Families Succeed in the Midwest***

Although living in rural America comes with advantages such as safety, wide-open spaces and a sense of community, rural families face many challenges as well. They have fewer choices (and therefore higher prices) for items such as groceries and household necessities, limited access to high-paying jobs, inadequate or no public transportation options, financial services that can be more predatory than service-oriented, and often little or no access to high-speed internet, all of which can hamper the economic success of rural communities.

The MGA, with financial support from the [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#), recently hosted a summit for rural leaders to discuss ways that government and nonprofit organizations can work to combat rural poverty. Teams from Illinois, Indiana and Ohio, all of which were appointed by their respective governors' offices, met in Columbus, Ohio, on Oct. 27-29 and shared strategies to help rural families "earn, keep and grow their money".



The summit continued the MGA's focus on rural development. The MGA's support for strong rural development policies have been expressed in a [2005 policy resolution](#), in the [2007 Policy Objectives and Recommendations for the Farm Bill](#), and in its support for renewable and biobased fuels and materials.

Topics at the recent MGA summit included:

- Education for rural families about money "traps" such as payday

lending, anticipation loans and rent-to-own programs

- Information on benefit cliffs, when a small increase in wages lead to a dramatic reduction in benefits
- Awareness of the Earned Income Tax Credit
- Home foreclosure prevention
- Individual development accounts

Additional topics included ways to build community infrastructure by using community colleges effectively, growing community-based endowment programs, expanding car ownership programs and increasing high-speed Internet availability.

This is the second summit that the MGA and the Annie E. Casey Foundation have co-sponsored. In September 2006, a similar summit was held in Fergus Falls, Minn., where state teams from Minnesota, North Dakota, Kansas and Wisconsin participated.

### ***MGA Releases Additional Fact Sheets***

The MGA continues to publish fact sheets intended to provide greater awareness of innovative new energy technologies and practices being employed in the Midwest. In addition to its previously released fact sheet on [biofuels](#), the MGA has released an informational sheet on [carbon capture and storage and enhanced oil recovery](#). The Midwest is uniquely positioned to be a leader in the development of both of these energy strategies, given its vast coal resources and underground geological formations.

The MGA also has released fact sheets that correspond to the four themes laid out in its [Energy Security and Climate Stewardship Platform](#): [energy efficiency](#), [biobased products and transportation](#), [renewable electricity](#), and [advanced coal and carbon capture and storage](#). The sheets highlight various goals, objectives and options that the Platform lays out and provide information on current initiatives being undertaken in the region to help achieve those goals.

In addition to the links provided above, all these publications can be viewed through the "[Publications](#)" tab on MGA's Web site.

## ***Congress Passes Needed LIHEAP Funding***

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) exists to provide aid for low-income households that pay a high percentage of their income for home energy. LIHEAP has proven to be immensely helpful for low-income families living in the Midwest. The necessary additional funding for LIHEAP was included in the continuing resolution that President Bush signed on Sept. 30. Passage came just in time, as there has been a surge in shut offs by utility companies.



The legislation awards \$5.1 billion to states in LIHEAP funds for FY 2009. Of that amount, \$4.5 billion was designated for basic grants, an increase of \$2.53 billion compared to FY 2008. The remaining \$590.3 million will be provided as emergency contingency funds, the same level as provided in FY 08. MGA states accounted for more than 30 percent of total state allocations. Out of the top 15 receiving states, seven of those were located in the Midwest. Specifically, the funds can go to provide financial assistance toward a household's energy bill and can provide emergency assistance if a household's home energy service is shut off or about to be shut off. LIHEAP funding can also be applied to a range of other energy-related services that states may choose to offer, such as weatherization improvements, utility equipment repair and replacement, budget counseling and for other projects.

In December 2007, the MGA sent a [letter](#) to Congress requesting additional LIHEAP dollars so the program would have adequate levels of funding for the Midwest.

## ***Midwestern Governors Take Steps to Enhance State Services***

In these unsure economic times, many states are developing strategies to help boost employment and job creation. Many governors are adopting creative approaches to improve the employment status and quality of life for the residents of their respective state. Many of these new policies involve reorganizing government agencies, making it easier for discouraged workers to locate potential employers and developing educational initiatives to encourage greater placement for high school graduates.

### **Michigan**

Michigan Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm is leading the way in developing new energy efficiency-related jobs in her state by creating the Department of Energy, Labor, and Economic Growth (DELEG). DELEG was formed by consolidating all activities related to the energy sector into the Department of Labor and Economic Growth. By combining all activities related to renewable energy and

energy efficiency, along with workforce and economic development functions, Granholm is focusing on the creation of a new energy economy to provide for new job opportunities and increases in the energy sector.

This new department will reorganize and streamline current initiatives, including "green jobs" training through the state's No Worker Left Behind initiative, and the deployment of new energy-efficiency building codes.

#### **Minnesota**

Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty recently unveiled his "Green Jobs Investment Initiative." Seeing green jobs as the biggest change in the economy since the industrial revolution, Pawlenty created the initiative to provide for incentives for new technology and innovation, as well as to tap into opportunities for job growth. Further, the governor's new initiative calls for tracking state government's energy usage in order to hold it accountable for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and pollution.

#### **North Dakota**

Rural areas have long struggled to attract young people to their communities. North Dakota Gov. John Hoeven has taken a proactive approach to securing quality workers by launching a statewide career promotion initiative across his state. Administered by the North Dakota Department of Commerce, the Career Conversations program connects students with workers in high-wage/high-demand occupations in the state. In an effort to meet the state's workforce needs, the program will introduce North Dakota students to careers believed to have a strong future in the state. In addition to encouraging young North Dakotans to remain in the state, officials work to attract people from out-of-state to relocate.

#### **Ohio**

In September, Gov. Ted Strickland established the Ohio Economic Growth Cabinet (OEGC), a new subdivision of his cabinet. The OEGC will focus on creating jobs and increasing economic opportunities, but is only the first part of the Ohio Department of Development's Strategic Plan for Economic Development. The OEGC will focus on three main areas: promoting a comprehensive approach to business needs, developing a unified economic development budget to identify investments made throughout the state and monitoring the progress of economic development.

#### **Wisconsin**

Wisconsin Gov. Jim Doyle has launched an initiative to link unemployed people with information on available jobs within the state. Wisconsin has launched a Web site, [www.JobCenterOfWisconsin.com](http://www.JobCenterOfWisconsin.com), devoted to providing free employment connections that will make it easier for employers and potential employees to make those essential links. The Web site, along with new initiatives at job centers throughout Wisconsin, will make it easier for job seekers to create a résumé. It also provides a toll-free number to an information help line about jobs.

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