

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2026 BILLD CLASS OF LEGISLATORS

The Council of State Governments is proud to announce and highlight this year’s class of BILLD Fellows. Held every summer in Madison, Wis., the Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development is a signature program of the CSG Midwestern Legislative Conference. The intensive five-day training institute helps newer legislators develop the skills necessary to become effective leaders, informed decision-makers and astute policy analysts. Thirty-nine legislators from 11 Midwestern states and four Canadian provinces are part of the 2026 BILLD class. They were selected by legislative peers to be BILLD Fellows through a competitive application process.

More than 1,000 current and former legislators have graduated from the BILLD program. Many alumni have gone on to become top legislative leaders and to hold high-level positions in state executive and judicial branches. Others are now serving in the U.S. Congress. CSG Midwest provides staff support to the Midwestern Legislative Conference.



BILLD



REP. KEITH ALLEN

After many years of experience as a business leader in agriculture, Keith Allen came to the legislature ready to make a positive difference on farm and rural policy. The co-owner and operator of a successful dairy goat farm for more than two decades, Rep. Allen also has owned a seed business and served as district staff for a member of Congress.

His community service has included being a member and volunteer for organizations such as 4-H, Future Farmers of America, the Farm Bureau and the Dairy Goat Association. Rep. Allen holds a bachelor’s degree from the University of Minnesota and is a graduate of the Minnesota Ag and Rural Leadership Program.

- Kenyon, Minnesota
Republican
- first elected: 2024
- Standing Committees:
- Capital Investment
 - Commerce Finance and Policy
 - Higher Education Finance and Policy
 - Rules and Legislative Administration



SEN. RYAN BRAUNBERGER

Ryan Braunberger has long been a community leader, from service on a nonprofit board that meets the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities to his work as co-chair of a group that implemented statewide HIV and viral hepatitis prevention and care initiatives.

In the legislature, where he serves as Senate minority caucus leader, his priorities include pursuing policies that uphold civil rights protections, particularly in areas such as housing, healthcare and LGBTQ+ rights. Outside the legislature, Sen. Braunberger is an independent contractor and transportation specialist. He has a bachelor’s degree in social work from Minnesota State University.

- Fargo, North Dakota
Democrat
- first elected: 2022
- Standing Committees:
- Judiciary
 - State and Local Government



REP. MARGARET ARNEY

A longtime community volunteer, Margaret Arney first entered politics locally, winning election as an alderperson for the suburban Milwaukee town of Wauwatosa.

Her professional background has given her a unique lens into the interconnectedness of local, state and non-governmental systems and how they impact the day-to-day life of constituents. Rep. Arney has served as a nonprofit development leader for multiple Milwaukee-area organizations and as an instructor in the Social Work Department at Concordia University Wisconsin. She has a master’s degree in social service administration from the University of Chicago.

- Wauwatosa, Wisconsin
Democrat
- first elected: 2024
- Standing Committees:
- Review of Administrative Rules
 - Transportation



MLA KIM BRECKNER

As an attorney, Kim Breckner has worked with large and small organizations, from nonprofits to major corporations. She has brought these professional skills to the community as well, holding leadership positions with the local chapter of Big Brothers Big Sisters and local arts groups. She also was the first female president of the Saskatchewan Drag Racing Association.

MLA Breckner graduated with distinction from the University of Saskatchewan College of Law. She has worked in-house with a national accounting firm and a global mining company, and had a private practice specializing in corporate, employment, mining and renewable energy law.

- Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
New Democratic Party
- first elected: 2024
- Roles/Duties:
- Opposition deputy house leader
 - Shadow minister: Saskatchewan Research Council
 - Shadow minister: Trade and Export Development



REP. RACHEL BAKER

Rachel Baker was quickly identified by legislative peers in Ohio as an important voice on health policy. Soon after being elected, she was selected as ranking member of the House Medicaid Committee and as a member of the Health Committee. She also co-leads the bipartisan Safer Communities Work Group.

Rep. Baker has a PhD in nursing from the University of Cincinnati and is a respected researcher, instructor and presenter on evidence-based practices in nursing. She began her career as a direct care nurse. Her priorities include building state policies that recognize the importance of addressing healthy communities and social determinants of health.

- Cincinnati, Ohio
Democrat
- first elected: 2022
- Standing Committees:
- Finance
 - Health
 - Medicaid (ranking member)



MLA JENNIFER CHEN

After arriving in Manitoba as an international student, Jennifer Chen earned a master’s degree in kinesiology research from the University of Manitoba. She was soon drawn to public service. In her first elected role, she served as a school trustee and vice chair of the Winnipeg School Division Board. She also has been active in a number of local organizations and societies, including CancerCare Manitoba, The Newcomer Advisory Committee and the Asian Heritage Society.

MLA Chen is the first Chinese-Canadian member of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. She was the 2021 recipient of the Immigrant Women of Inspiration Award.

- Winnipeg, Manitoba
New Democratic Party
- first elected: 2023
- Note: There is not a permanent membership list for most standing committees in the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba*



SEN. CHRIS BALKEMA

After more than 30 years at Caterpillar, which included key management roles in areas ranging from human resources and operations, to logistics and purchasing, Chris Balkema has become a respected local political leader. Prior to joining the Senate, he guided the Grundy County Board for eight years as its chair. He also has served on the county’s Economic Development Council.

Sen. Balkema’s legislative focus includes championing policies that foster a healthy business environment in Illinois. Outside the legislature, he serves on the Business Advisory Council for Taylor University, where he earned his undergraduate degree. He has an MBA from Bradley University.

- Channahon, Illinois
Republican
- first elected: 2024
- Standing Committees:
- Agriculture
 - Appropriations – Education (minority spokesperson)
 - Behavioral and Mental Health
 - Education
 - Labor
 - Pensions
 - Revenue



REP. NELS CHRISTIANSON

Team building and problem solving have been essential to the career path taken by Nels Christianson, a roadmaster for 15 years at BNSF Railway and a safety and compliance manager for Northern Plains Railroad. Those skills help guide his legislative work. One particular interest has been working with and learning from others to improve state criminal justice and corrections policy. Rep. Christianson has carried multiple bills to help indigent defendants and others involved in the justice system.

He got his start in politics as a local party leader, and also is active in his local church and fraternal lodge. He has a bachelor’s degree in business administration from the University of Southern California.

- Grand Forks, North Dakota
Republican
- first elected: 2024
- Standing Committees:
- Judiciary
 - Transportation



REP. BRETT BARKER

Dating back to his days as an Eagle Scout, Brett Barker has valued the idea of pulling people together in the service of others. He brings that outlook, plus a background in health care and a deep knowledge of his home community, to work in the legislature.

A former mayor for the city of Nevada, Rep. Barker is a vice president of operations and compliance officer for NuCara Pharmacy. He earned his pharmacy degree from the University of Iowa, where he also became involved in student government. Rep. Barker later became chair of the Iowa Pharmacy Board and senior policy advisor for the Iowa Pharmacy Association, successfully championing policy changes to help pharmacists and the people they serve.

- Nevada, Iowa
Republican
- first elected: 2024
- Standing Committees:
- Commerce
 - Economic Growth and Technology
 - Health and Human Services (vice chair)
 - Natural Resources



REP. CORY CRISWELL

Rising to the position of House assistant majority whip in his fourth year of service, Cory Criswell has exemplified leadership early in his career.

He also is a respected educator and small-business owner in Indiana’s Henry County, where he has lived all his life.

Rep. Criswell currently is the development director for the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame. He previously worked as an assistant athletic director and high school basketball coach. He has a master’s degree in education from Ball State University. His legislative interests include ensuring that the state’s alcohol and gaming laws find the right balance of supporting economic growth while maintaining adequate regulation.

- Middletown, Indiana
Republican
- first elected: 2022
- Standing Committees:
- Agriculture and Rural Development
 - Public Policy
 - Ways and Means



REP. LISA DAVIS

Following her graduation from Northern Illinois University College of Law, Lisa Davis jumped right into public service, joining the Cook County public defender’s office.

Rep. Davis has brought her wealth of professional experience to work as a legislator. She serves on the House Judiciary Committee with a focus on criminal justice and public safety. Rep. Davis has maintained her role as a public defender while serving in the Illinois General Assembly, providing a unique insight into how the laws passed in Springfield impact the entire state. Born and raised on Chicago’s South Side, she remains active in her home community, including as a member of several community boards.

Chicago, Illinois Democrat
first elected: 2024

- Standing Committees:
- Adoption/Child Welfare
 - Appropriations - Pensions and Personnel
 - Child Care Access/Early Childhood Education
 - Econ. Opportunity/Equity
 - Judiciary – Criminal
 - Restorative Justice/ Public Safety
 - State Govt. Administration



MPP ALEXA GILMOUR

Alexa Gilmour came to legislative public service through her faith. MPP Gilmour’s faith- and community-based activities have included serving as minister of Windermere United Church for 10 years as well as founding and leading various congregation initiatives to help individuals and families in need — for example, the Stone Soup Network, the There For You program, and Neighbours Helping Neighbours. This work included efforts to help community members through the COVID-19 pandemic.

MPP Gilmour is a recipient of the Alumni/Service Award from Emmanuel College, the theological college of Victoria University in the University of Toronto.

Toronto, Ontario
New Democratic Party
first elected: 2025

- Roles/Duties:
- Member: Government Agencies Committee
 - Critic: Citizenship, Multiculturalism and Ontario Autism Program
 - Critic: Women’s Social and Economic Opportunity



REP. EMILY DIEVENDORF

Emily Dievendorf’s work in the Michigan House did not begin as a legislator, but rather as a staff person. A former legislative assistant and chief of staff, Rep. Dievendorf left state government for a time and took on a series of leadership roles: executive director for Equality Michigan, president of the Lansing Association of Human Rights, board member of the Lansing Area AIDS Network and the Ingham County Women’s Commission, and Michigan Advisory Committee co-chair for the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

Rep. Dievendorf continues to work on civil rights issues, particularly in criminal justice. Rep. Dievendorf has a bachelor’s degree in social relations and public policy from Michigan State University.

Lansing, Michigan Democrat
first elected: 2022

- Standing Committees:
- Agriculture
 - Regulatory Reform



SEN. DUNIXI GUERECA

At an early age, Dunixi Guereca became a leader in politics and his community. That continues today, inside and outside the Unicameral Legislature. One thread in this work: his commitment to pursuing policies that deliver a quality public education to all, regardless of ZIP code. Sen. Guereca is executive director of Stand for Schools and, as a legislator, prioritizes evidence-based measures that reduce disparities in the learning opportunities available to young people.

Sen. Guereca’s previous work has included serving as business director of the Boy Scouts of America (he was a Boy Scout himself) and as political director for a union of healthcare workers.

Omaha, Nebraska
Nonpartisan legislature
first elected: 2024

- Standing Committees:
- Government, Military and Veterans Affairs
 - State-Tribal Relations
 - Transportation and Telecommunications



REP. TY DRESSLER

In his home district of western North Dakota, Ty Dressler already was known for his business and community leadership before deciding to run for a House seat. He is the co-owner and operator of a specialty grain-processing business, and served seven years (including one as vice president) on the Richardton-Taylor School Board.

Since being elected to the House in 2024, Rep. Dressler has focused on issues related to state taxation and transportation. A graduate of North Dakota State University, with a bachelor’s degree in natural resource management, Rep. Dressler previously worked as a private lands biologist for the state’s Game and Fish Department.

Richardton, North Dakota Republican
first elected: 2024

- Standing Committees:
- Finance and Taxation
 - Transportation



REP. KIM HICKS

At age 16, Kim Hicks began working with individuals with developmental disabilities — a commitment that has shaped her career ever since. Rep. Hicks has served as a special education teacher and disability advocate, with experience that also includes managing an independent living program, serving as the autism policy lead for the state Department of Human Services, and administering grants for the department’s Workforce Incentive Fund.

A foster parent as well as a legislator, Rep. Hicks is deeply engaged in policies affecting health care, child welfare, and services for individuals with disabilities. She holds a bachelor’s degree in developmental and learning disabilities from Winona State University.

Rochester, Minnesota Democrat
first elected: 2022

- Standing Committees:
- Children and Families Finance and Policy
 - Higher Education Finance and Policy
 - Human Services Finance and Policy



REP. ERIC EMERY

Eric Emery has witnessed firsthand the needs of rural communities when it comes to healthcare access and systems. In fact, he has spent many years delivering that care, as a paramedic and emergency medicine administrator.

Those 20-plus years of professional experience helped lead Rep. Emery to try and make a difference through state policy. Since first being elected to office in 2022, he has served as an advocate for first responders and healthcare systems, particularly those in rural and tribal communities facing significant challenges. Rep. Emery has a bachelor’s degree in emergency medical services and healthcare administration from Creighton University.

Rosebud, South Dakota Democrat
first elected: 2022

- Standing Committee:
- Government Operations and Audit
 - Health and Human Services
 - State Affairs



SEN. LA KEISHA JACKSON

A fixture of community service and leadership in Indianapolis, La Keisha Jackson came to the legislature following 10 years as a member of the City-County Council. The CEO of the Pathway Resource Center, she is a recipient of two Mayor’s Community Service Awards and the 2024 Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award.

Sen. Jackson was tapped in her first term to be ranking minority member of two separate Senate committees. Many of her legislative priorities center on healthcare — for example, expanding access to quality care and addressing systemic barriers to health equity. She has an MBA with a specialization in healthcare from Indiana Wesleyan University.

Indianapolis, Indiana Democrat
first elected: 2024

- Standing Committees:
- Environmental Affairs (ranking minority member)
 - Health and Provider Services
 - Local Government (ranking minority member)
 - Public Policy



REP. MORGAN FOREMAN

Morgan Foreman brings varied experiences to the Legislature: paraeducator for students with special needs, legislative staff person, community organizer for educational justice, local party leader and more. She also has served on multiple local boards in the Ypsilanti area.

Rep. Foreman has become a leader on health and environment issues, including as co-chair of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Legislative Caucus Task Force on Emerging Contaminants. She also has championed policies to expand coverage for menopause-related treatments and to improve autism supports. She is a graduate of the Michigan Educational Policy Fellowship Program and the Michigan Political Leadership Program.

Ypsilanti, Michigan Democrat
first elected: 2024

- Standing Committees:
- Health Policy
 - Natural Resources and Tourism



MLA JENNIFER JOHNSON

Before being elected to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, Jennifer Johnson served her community as a registered nurse. She also is the longtime owner and operator of a successful prairie fruit orchard. The experiences of running the family fruit farm inspired her to write a children’s book: “Cherries – Just Right.”

MLA Johnson’s community activities have included serving as director of the Bentley Agricultural Society, president of Canadian Cherry Producers Inc., chair of the Bentley and Area Multi-use Facility Building Society, and club leader for the Bentley 4-H Multiclub. She has a bachelor’s degree in nursing from the University of Alberta.

Lacombe, Alberta
United Conservative Party
first elected: 2023

- Committees:
- Alberta Heritage Savings Fund (deputy chair)
 - Families and Communities
 - Private Bills (chair)



REP. DAN GEHLBACH

Education has been at the center of Dan Gehlbach’s career, with his work extending well beyond the traditional classroom. In 2010, Gehlbach founded and began operating a center in West Des Moines that provides supplemental math studies for K-12 students. The business grew into one of the most successful Mathnasium franchises in a six-state region.

Elected to the Waukee Community School Board in 2019, Rep. Gehlbach successfully sought a legislative seat three years later and soon became a state policy leader on education, including legislation on charter schools and education savings accounts. He has an MBA from Arizona State University.

Urbandale, Iowa Republican
first elected: 2022

- Standing Committees:
- Appropriations
 - Economic Growth and Technology
 - Education
 - Health and Human Services



SEN. MARGO JUAREZ

Margo Juarez had a long career in the administrative side of government, with more than 30 years combined in the Social Security Administration and Internal Revenue Service, before entering electoral politics.

She was appointed to the Omaha Public Schools Board in late 2021 and elected to the board in 2022. In the legislature, her policy interests range from education and child care, to passenger rail and immigration. Outside the legislature, Sen. Juarez works at a local community center and is an active member of the South Omaha Neighborhood Alliance. She has an MBA from the University of Nebraska Omaha.

Omaha, Nebraska
Nonpartisan legislature
first elected: 2024

- Standing Committees:
- Education
 - Natural Resources
 - Nebraska Retirement Systems



SEN. SARAH KEYESKI

Improving youth mental health services and outcomes is a driving force for Sarah Keyeski, both inside and outside the legislative arena. Since earning a master's degree in counseling psychology from Northwestern University, she has worked as a therapist and professional counselor in her home state of Wisconsin. Sen. Keyeski uses these years of educational and professional experience as the ranking member of a Senate committee focusing on mental health and substance abuse policy.

She also is the founder of Lift Lodi, a nonprofit group that helps promote volunteerism and days of service in her rural community.

Lodi, Wisconsin
Democrat
first elected: 2024

Standing Committees:

- Agriculture and Revenue
- Education
- Mental Health, Substance Abuse Prevention, Children and Families (ranking member)



SEN. JEFF KLEMP

A fifth-generation Kansan who grew up on his family Angus farm, Jeff Klemp has more than 25 years of experience in leading businesses of all shapes and sizes. He is the president and CEO of Century Van Lines, a leading provider of international military relocation services for service members and their families, and a principal in the engineering consulting firm Kinetic Retail Group.

His legislative priorities include tax reform and fiscal management. In his community, Sen. Klemp has been involved in efforts to address homelessness and addiction and to advance second-chance initiatives. He has an MBA from Baker University.

Lansing, Kansas
Republican
first elected: 2024

Standing Committees:

- Assessment and Taxation Commerce
- Transportation (vice chair)
- Ways and Means



MLA BARRET KROPF

Barrett Kropf's career in the sports industry spanned more than 30 years. As a college and youth hockey coach, he earned multiple Coach of the Year awards and led several championship teams. Additionally, MLA Kropf served as chaplain for the Saskatchewan Roughriders of the Canadian Football League and worked many years with Athletes in Action, a Christian sports ministry.

Prior to his election to the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly, MLA Kropf also served on local community recreation boards and as president of the Saskatchewan Cycling Association. He operated several businesses in the province as well. MLA Kropf has a bachelor's degree in leadership from Trinity Western University.

Caronport, Saskatchewan
Saskatchewan Party
first elected: 2024

Roles/Duties:

- Member: Human Services Cabinet Committee
- Legislative secretary: Education
- Member: Red Tape Reduction Cabinet Committee



REP. ETHAN LAWSON

A lifelong Hoosier, Ethan Lawson came to elective office after working in key positions for generals as well as some of the state's top political leaders. He has been director of communications for the Indiana National Guard and director of speechmaking for the governor, plus served in key positions in the offices of the Indiana lieutenant governor and auditor.

Rep. Lawson, who also once worked as a district assistant for a U.S. House member, has an MBA from Western Governors University. He points to leadership in crafting sound fiscal policy as among his goals as legislator. He has had success early on his legislative career, authoring six bills that became law in his first two sessions.

Greenfield, Indiana
Republican
first elected: 2024

Standing Committees:

- Elections and Apportionment
- Roads and Transportation
- Veterans Affairs and Public Safety



REP. ANQUAM MAHAMOUD

Anquam Mahamoud came to the Minnesota House with a focus on transforming and improving health care for underserved communities across the state — a priority that comes from her lived experience growing up in a Minneapolis neighborhood where many households had unmet health needs. Her legislative work also focuses on policies to improve economic opportunities and housing access.

Prior to joining the legislature, Rep. Mahamoud served as state planning director for Minnesota's health insurance marketplace, MNsure. She has a bachelor's degree in psychology from St. Catherine University.

Minneapolis, Minnesota
Democrat
first elected: 2024

Standing Committees:

- Energy Finance and Policy
- Health Finance and Policy
- Judiciary Finance and Civil Law



MLA JAMIE MARTENS

Jamie Martens has an extensive background in law enforcement, serving as an auxiliary constable with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and as a deputy sheriff.

She also has a distinguished record of leadership in local government. In the city of Martensville, she served on the City Council and as deputy mayor. MLA Martens took on national roles, too, as Saskatchewan's representative at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and as vice chair of the Canadian Rural Forum. She has now assumed leadership positions in Saskatchewan government, as provincial secretary and legislative secretary for the minister of Trade and Export Development.

Martensville, Saskatchewan
Saskatchewan Party
first elected: 2024

Roles/Duties:

- Legislative secretary for Saskatchewan Trade and Export Development
- Member of Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice Committee
- Provincial secretary



REP. YOLONDA MORRIS

Yolonda Morris served patients for 26 years as a certified nurse assistant, a career that gave her unique insights into the needs of healthcare professionals and the people they care for. She also dedicated her time as a local union organizer for the Service Employees International Union.

Rep. Morris has brought these experiences to her work in the General Assembly, advocating for supports for healthcare workers and others: for example, adequate staffing levels, a livable minimum wage; and universal child care. Early in her legislative career, too, Rep. Morris was chosen by legislative leaders to serve as vice chair of the Gun Violence Prevention Committee.

Chicago, Illinois
Democrat
first elected: 2024

Standing Committees:

- Appropriations - Health & Human Services
- Appropriations - Public Safety
- Gun Violence Prevention (vice chair)
- Health Care Availability/Accessibility
- Human Services
- Mental Health/Addiction
- Personnel/Pensions



REP. TRACY KATZ MUHL

Tracy Katz Muhl brings many years of experience as an attorney, grassroots organizer and local school leader to her work in the General Assembly. A graduate of the University of Chicago Law School, she has practiced law for two decades at a leading Chicago law firm. She also has provided legal services to groups such as Equality Illinois and Lambda Legal.

Prior to joining the legislature, Rep. Katz Muhl served as president of her local school board. She also been an active member of Moms Demand Action and a local group providing services to youths. Her legislative priorities include advancing policies to strengthen public education, prevent gun violence, and protect civil rights.

Northbrook, Illinois
Democrat
first elected: 2024

Standing Committees:

- Appropriations - Health and Human Services
- Gun Violence Prevention
- Higher Education
- Insurance
- Judiciary – Civil
- Mental Health & Addiction (vice chair)



REP. BERYL BROWN PICCOLANTONIO

For more than 20 years, Beryl Brown Piccolantonio worked as an attorney for the state of Ohio, serving in leadership roles that included chief ombudsperson for the workers' compensation system and assistant general counsel and administrative law judge for the Ohio Industrial Service Commission.

At the local level, she was elected to three consecutive terms to her community school board and served eight years as president. State K-12 education policy now is a priority for her as a legislator. Her leadership roles include being vice chair of the Women's Caucus and minority whip. Rep. Brown Piccolantonio has a law degree from The Ohio State University.

Gahanna, Ohio
Democrat
first elected: 2024

Standing Committees:

- Education
- Finance
- Judiciary
- Rules and Reference
- Workforce and Higher Education



REP. KEVIN RITTER

A successful business owner, coach, educator and public speaker, Kevin Ritter first entered electoral politics locally, successfully running for county commissioner in 2018.

Rep. Ritter attended Central Michigan University on a baseball scholarship and earned a master's degree in political science from the school. He has been a professor at multiple colleges, as well as taught at and co-founded the Veritas Classical Academy, a preK-12 school. Additionally, Rep. Ritter founded Coast to Coast Baseball, running this sports development organization for many years. In the legislature, he helped form the Appalachian Regional Caucus and is vice chair of the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee.

Marietta, Ohio
Republican
first elected: 2024

Standing Committees:

- Education
- Energy
- Finance
- Workforce and Higher Education (vice chair)



REP. JODI SALVO

Jodi Salvo gained invaluable knowledge for her legislative career as a social worker and as the leader of organizations providing behavioral services. Most recently, she served as the director of prevention services for Ohio Guidestone. Rep. Salvo also once worked as a geriatric social worker; now as a lawmaker, she is interested in pursuing policies that help older adults in Ohio by meeting their aging-related needs. She is vice chair of the Aging Caucus.

Rep. Salvo has served as a board member for several professional associations and as board president of the Ohio Statewide Prevention Coalition Association. She has a master's degree in social work from Marywood University.

Bolivar, Ohio
Republican
first elected: 2024

Standing Committees:

- Children and Human Services
- Community Revitalization
- Energy
- Natural Resources



SEN. ANN JOHNSON STEWART

A civil engineer, successful small-business owner and longtime educator, Ann Johnson Stewart brings a unique mix of skills to the legislature. Many of her legislative interests center on policies related to public infrastructure and water quality and use.

Sen. Johnson Stewart founded Professional Engineering Services in 1995 and has decades of experience in highway and airport design and construction engineering. A pioneer in 3-D civil design, she has a master's degree in civil engineering from the University of Minnesota. Her work at the university as an instructor and program director includes a 15-year stint leading the undergraduate degree program for construction management.

Wayzata, Minnesota
Democrat
first elected: 2020

Standing Committees:

- Capital Investment
- Environment, Climate, and Legacy
- State and Local Government
- Transportation (vice chair)



REP. SEQUANNA TAYLOR

Sequanna Taylor’s focus as a legislator is a continuation of her career as well as her many years of community involvement: find ways to build strong communities. She previously served as vice president of the Milwaukee School Board and as a member of the Milwaukee County Board.

Outside of these governmental roles, Rep. Taylor is the founder and CEO of Taylor Legacies Inc., an organization focused on economic and social initiatives that create opportunity in underserved communities. This includes the organization’s nonprofit arm, Raising Our Village. She has a bachelor of science degree from Cardinal Stritch University.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin Democrat
first elected: 2024

- Standing Committees:
- Audit
 - Criminal Justice and Public Safety



REP. SUZANNE WIKLE

With nearly 20 years of experience in health policy and advocacy, Suzanne Wikle has quickly become a trusted voice in the legislature on the impact that state laws and programs have on children and families.

A trained social worker, she previously served as the senior director of policy and research for Kansas Action for Children. Today, outside the legislature, Rep. Wikle is the associate director for state health policy and advocacy for The Center for Law and Social Policy, a national, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that advances policy solutions for people with low incomes. She has a master of social work from the University of Kansas.

Lawrence, Kansas Democrat
first elected: 2024

- Standing Committees:
- Financial Institutions and Pensions
 - Health and Human Services
 - Insurance



SEN. KARA WARME

After leaving a long and successful career in the telecommunications industry, Kara Warne turned to public service, applying her analytical, business and leadership skills toward supporting her local community. Those roles have included substitute teacher, volunteer and, now, state senator. She has worked for her church’s foster care ministry and started a food backpack program for food-insecure children. Sen. Warne also served as chief development officer for Youth & Shelter Services.

During her first term in office, Sen. Warne was tapped by legislative peers to serve as chair of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee chair. She has an MBA from the University of Iowa.

Ames, Iowa Republican
first elected: 2024

- Standing Committees:
- Appropriations
 - Commerce
 - Health and Human Services (chair)
 - Technology
 - Transportation
 - Veterans Affairs



REP. DAWN WOLF

Dawn Wolf spent many years in public service before joining the Kansas Legislature: six years as an Ottawa County commissioner along with another eight years on the county’s Planning and Zoning Board.

A dedicated volunteer, Rep. Wolf is active in her church, helped with an after-school program in her community, and earned a Volunteer of the Year award from the U.S. Postal Service. Her professional career has included many years as a high school online learning coordinator and as a community college academic coordinator. Rep. Wolf has an associate degree in business administration from Brown Mackie College.

Bennington, Kansas Republican
first elected: 2024

- Standing Committees:
- Education
 - Local Government
 - Taxation



REP. KERI WEEMS

Keri Weems has worked for a mix of small startups and Fortune 500 companies during her varied professional career, while also contributing to her local community in various capacities. That has included time on the Brookings City Council, as a member and deputy mayor. In those leadership roles, she helped the town through a major change in governance (to a city-manager structure) and led work on several new economic development initiatives.

Economic development policy remains a top priority for Rep. Weems as a state legislator. She has an MBA from the University of South Dakota.

Sioux Falls, South Dakota Republican
first elected: 2024

- Standing Committees:
- Military and Veterans Affairs
 - Taxation
 - Transportation

THANK YOU TO THE 2026 SPONSORS OF THE BILLD PROGRAM

Each year, the Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development is supported by organizations, foundations and corporations that believe in the importance of legislators having the opportunity to develop their leadership and policymaking skills. CSG Midwest gratefully acknowledges our partners for their generous support of the 2026 BILLD program. Their contributions help make the Bowhay Institute possible.

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