

PERSPECTIVES 2021-2022



Eastern Regional Conference
THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS



From the Director

Credit: Leo Biette-Finmons.

In March of 2020, despite warnings of a possible pandemic, a team of CSG East staff traveled to Hartford, Connecticut, for our annual Capitol visit with legislative, executive, and judicial members. We arrived at the state house only to find that our legislative colleagues had canceled all meetings and were hastily gathering to determine how to close down the legislative complex for a few weeks until things blew over. We did meet briefly with some elected officials and cautiously went ahead with a dinner for our Connecticut friends. We returned to New York the following day, collected our laptops and chargers, and set out to work from home for a short time.

Like all of you, we never expected this situation would continue for long, let alone 19 months and counting. Nor did we envision the amount of change that those 19 months would bring to our work, to the economy, to social and political issues across the country, and to our collective mental health.

In our efforts to continue to serve our members, we quickly pivoted our programming to webinars and virtual conferences that would take place through 2020 and well into 2021. These online seminars have helped us to engage our Eastern regional members and to expand our audiences throughout the country. CSG East's Council on Communities of Color produced numerous "micro-summits" that

explored challenges facing communities of color during the COVID-19 crisis; these programs continued in 2021 as the Movement Summit, which addressed complex issues including the role of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), reparations, the plight of Black farmers, and educational discrepancies. The Energy and Environment Committee organized a program on offshore wind, as well as a two-day conference on carbon sequestration in agriculture and forests, that drew participants from across the continent. And the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee investigated food systems in northern New England and how they relate to the national distribution of food.

During this summer's virtual Annual Meeting, we registered close to 500 people and welcomed back several corporate sponsors for the weeklong program. We hosted our regular policy committee meetings, as well as several plenary sessions with provocative thinkers including Heather McGhee and Tony Seba, whose presentations are discussed in this annual report.

Change is afoot and we seem to be adapting to a new normal, although too many citizens are dealing with the pandemic's economic and employment challenges, housing insecurity, and mental health issues. There were some dark clouds on state budget horizons late last year, but the influx of federal monies into a variety of pots has blown many of those clouds away. States have been working on how best to manage those funds for the needs of their residents. CSG is providing our state members with ongoing analyses of the various components of the American Rescue Plan, federal infrastructure spending, and other resources state leaders can use to inform state economic and civic recovery.

CSG East is not returning to the status quo ante, however. After a year and a half of working from home, we are planning on a hybrid return to our office in Lower Manhattan in the new year. We are slowly beginning to

re-engage in person with members and colleagues in careful settings. In August, CSG East held its Robert J. Thompson Eastern Leadership Academy in person; a record number of delegates gathered in Philadelphia in August to enhance their leadership skills.

One big change that the Eastern Office saw was the retirement at the end of 2020 of Wendell Hannaford after more than four decades of service to CSG. Wendell's encyclopedic knowledge of state government in the East is sorely missed. The pandemic prevented us from offering Wendell a proper farewell, which we hope to do when we gather in Manchester, New Hampshire, next August for the 2022 CSG East Annual Meeting.

And gather we will! We are working with our members in the Granite State to meet for our first in-person meeting in two years. Our theme of "States in Transition" will permit us to focus on the important efforts underway in our region — and nationally — to continue the recovery from the pandemic, to boost our economies, and to find solutions to some of the unforeseen issues that the pandemic has thrown our way. We are building opportunities in the program to learn from one another, to share best practices, and to catch up.

While we continue to adapt to new realities, one thing that will not change is our commitment to our members. This year we managed to schedule Zoom meetings with regional legislative leaders; next year we plan to meet in person as much as we can. But the pandemic has taught us that virtual meetings are a good addition to our programming, and we plan to continue to offer them.

As CSG East's new director, I look forward to embracing the changes and challenges before us to continue the extraordinary work that CSG has done for more than eight decades.

David N. Biette
Director, CSG Eastern Office

CSG East: Creating Policy Solutions

Since 1933, state officials have turned to The Council of State Governments (CSG) as an impartial source of research and information to help them meet the challenge of governing.

CSG, headquartered in Lexington, Kentucky, has four regional offices in the East, Midwest, South, and West.

CSG's Eastern Regional Conference (CSG East) has been located in New York City since 1937. Our team of experienced policy staff support legislative, judicial, and executive-branch officials from our 18 member jurisdictions in areas relating to agriculture, Canada/U.S. relations, education, energy and environment, fiscal affairs, health, international trade, and transportation.

CSG East facilitates the exchange of ideas among its member states, provinces, and territories, promotes networking among members, and conducts fact-based research and analysis to help shape effective public policy.

We also conduct leadership training programs and advocate on the federal level for programs and policies beneficial to our region.

CSG East is here for you. Call, email or visit us online at www.csg-erc.org.

The Council of State Governments

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Cover photograph: New Hampshire state house dome

Credit: Canva



Eastern Regional Conference
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States Prepare for an Infusion of Broadband Funds

BY TARA SAD



Credit: Consolidated Communications

New federal funding will enable broadband buildout in communities that have not been served by high-speed connections.

For the more than 18 million Americans who lack high-speed Internet access, relief is finally in sight.

An influx of federal money slated for state and local governments will enable broadband buildout in communities that have not been served by high-speed connections, and new federal rules aim to facilitate connections for those in need by creating better mapping of underserved areas.

The increase in funding is welcome news to members of the CSG East Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee, many of whom represent areas without adequate Internet service. Over the past three years, the committee has explored novel approaches to improving broadband access through a series of meetings with experts from the public and private sectors who are working to close the digital divide.

During the 2021 virtual CSG East Annual Meeting, the committee heard from Peggy Shaffer, executive director of ConnectMaine, a state government entity that is using a novel approach to collect better data for Maine's Blue Hill Peninsula, a rural coastal community in need of extended broadband buildout. Obtaining

accurate data about underserved homes and businesses will better position the community to access adequate federal funds, Shaffer said.

"It's really important, when we begin to look at how we're going to bring service to people, that we really understand who has service and who does not, especially if you're going to be eligible for federal grants," said Shaffer.

Improving FCC's broadband maps

Since 2019, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has been responsible for developing a comprehensive map of broadband access in the United States. The data is critical to local communities because the FCC uses it to determine where to direct billions of dollars each year to deploy broadband in unserved or underserved areas, but much of the data has been criticized as incomplete or misleading.

For example, a unit of geography such as a census tract or a census block is considered "covered," and ineligible for federal funding, if at least one business or residence in that area can obtain broadband. Experts

have shown this practice is problematic because the blocks vary in size: some are as large as the state of Connecticut, and in Alaska, one block is the size of New Jersey.

In March 2020, President Donald Trump signed a bill that will create a process to improve the accuracy of the FCC broadband maps. Among other things, the law requires that the FCC issue rules for the collection of granular data on the availability of broadband service from providers that must meet certain benchmarks, develop processes for challenging the maps and submitted data, provide technical assistance to tribal governments, conduct audits, create enforcement mechanisms, and report annually to Congress on the law's implementation.

The new law is a game-changer for states, said Brent Legg, executive director of government affairs at Connected Nation, a nonprofit that provides broadband mapping services for states and local communities, during the Annual Meeting discussion. "There will finally be an ongoing challenge process to scrutinize the data and continually improve the maps over time," he said.

The Maine speed test

In Maine, state officials have been working to accelerate accurate data collection. The Maine Broadband Coalition, which represents communities, providers, and nonprofits, has launched a statewide crowdsourcing data collection effort to determine the level and quality of service. Some 23,000 people have taken the coalition's broadband "speed test," whose results show that more than half of participants do not have access to basic broadband, which the FCC defines as 25 Mbps (megabits per second) download speeds and 3 Mbps upload speeds. "That's pretty extensive," said Shaffer. "So it's important for us to understand this data, both in terms of how we do outreach to communities and in terms of how we use funding to distribute grant money."

Experts note that the FCC's definition is insufficient because those speeds are extremely slow compared with fiber-optic service, which can deliver data at speeds up to 1,000 Mbps.

Shaffer presented three maps of the Blue Hill Peninsula that illustrated the stark discrepancy in data collection. One map contained data from service providers showing the areas that have broadband access and those that are not served. Another

contained data that had been crowdsourced from residents' speed tests indicating areas with service and those without. The third was a map from the FCC. Some of the crowdsourced data matched the map from providers, as well as the FCC map. But the crowdsourced data showed some areas that the FCC map identified as being served that do not, in fact, have broadband.

Shaffer explained that Maine is one of the first states to use a proprietary mapping tool created by software company VETRO Inc. The tool combines all of the data — from the FCC, from providers, and from crowdsourcing — to identify, with greater accuracy, residents that are not being served. The data provides a basis for applying for federal grants. The mapping tool can also provide an estimate of the buildout costs for a given area.

"This is the kind of information that states are gathering to make sure that our state and federal grant money that's coming in can be used to target unserved people, and can really meet the needs of the communities that are out there," she said.

An influx of funding

Shaffer said that better data will be critical as states prepare for an infusion of federal money dedicated to expanding rural broadband.

The American Rescue Plan Act signed by President Joe Biden in March includes \$350 billion in block grants to state and local governments that can be used for broadband, among other purposes; and a \$10 billion Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund that will be directed largely toward broadband projects. In addition, the infrastructure bill that Congress approved in November includes \$40 billion for states to build out broadband and \$14 billion to help consumers afford their Internet bills.

"It's really important that we understand where broadband is to be able to actually use this new federal money, along with state money and provider money, to bring universal service at a high enough quality that people have a network that they're going to use for the next 50 years," said Shaffer. ■

For more information on CSG East's work on broadband, please contact agriculture and rural affairs policy consultants Tara Sad or Bob Haefner (Agriculture-East@csgeast.org).

Transmission, NIMBY, and the Quest to Decarbonize the Grid

BY RONA COHEN



Credit: Isabel Beck

In early November, Maine voters approved a statewide ballot initiative to block further construction of the NECEC line. Avangrid CMP has filed a lawsuit claiming the referendum was unconstitutional.

In a swath of pristine forest in northwestern Maine, a heated conflict over a proposed transmission line has been playing out with striking familiarity.

The project, the New England Clean Energy Connect (NECEC), involves clear-cutting some 50 miles of Maine forest stretching southeast from the Canadian border to make way for transmission towers that would eventually connect with an existing utility corridor. The line would send Canadian hydropower to Massachusetts, where it would supply 17 percent of the electricity demand and help achieve the state's ambitious climate mandates.

As with another proposal before it in neighboring New Hampshire, the NECEC set off a firestorm of local opposition from environmentalists and bipartisan officials, who warn the project would decimate critical habitat for brook trout, wintering deer, and other species, with little advantage to local communities. The developer, Avangrid Central Maine Power, says it will bring much-needed jobs.

Similar battles are being waged over transmission lines across the country — projects that are intended to transport clean energy to power-hungry regions, but end up sparking local opposition among residents and community leaders. These conflicts raise a fundamental question about the tradeoffs associated with transition-

ing to a clean-energy future: Are localized environmental disturbances justified to make way for large quantities of zero-emission power intended to lower a region's overall carbon pollution?

"I think Maine and New Hampshire really have to be thoughtful for the precedents we're setting. Are we going to be used as the source of more wealth extraction for others, or are we going to be lifted up and empowered as a result of the transition to clean energy?" said Maine state Representative Seth Berry, who joined members of the CSG East Energy and Environment Committee last August during a virtual discussion that explored strategies for achieving a low-carbon grid.

Maine and Massachusetts are among four northeastern states that have pledged — through statute or executive order — to reach net neutrality by 2050. And every New England state, with the exception of New Hampshire, has set targets to get at least 80 percent of its power from clean sources by 2050, if not earlier.

Those who favor building long-distance transmission to carry massive quantities of baseload hydropower claim that it's cheaper than investing in huge amounts of distributed solar or other decentralized clean-energy generation. A 2020 report from Princeton University researchers found that transitioning to

net-zero emissions by midcentury will require a 60 percent increase in high-voltage transmission in the next decade alone.

New research from the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) revealed that ramping up transmission to facilitate trade in zero-carbon energy across states and borders could lower overall electricity system costs and improve reliability in the United States and Canada.

“We see that there’s a lot of potential benefits to be had from transmission expansion and cooperation between regions,” said Greg Brinkman, model engineering researcher at NREL, who briefed the CSG East Energy and Environment Committee on the report during the August meeting.

A familiar conflict

Before the NECEC, residents in New Hampshire waged a nearly 10-year battle against the Northern Pass, a proposal that also would have sent Canadian hydropower south to Massachusetts — bypassing local customers — via towers up to 120 feet high winding through the White Mountains National Forest. The region is a key destination for tourism, the state’s second-largest industry.

During the August committee meeting, New Hampshire state Representative Suzanne Smith explained that she fought the Northern Pass proposal out of concern about its impacts to the environment, residents, and local businesses. Smith recounted how developers proposed to bury a portion of the line underneath Main Street in the town of Plymouth without consulting with town officials. It was a major undertaking that would have disrupted local businesses as well as Plymouth State University during the busiest months of the year, she said. “The town hosted a public hearing, attended by over 100 people. People were up in arms. It was going to tear up the entire downtown area,” said Smith.

Smith co-sponsored legislation that revamped the state’s Site Evaluation Committee, the final arbiter on the project, that required any new transmission projects to meet four key criteria in order to move forward. In 2018, the committee determined that the developer, Eversource, had not met one of those requirements: proving that the line would not unduly affect the orderly development of the region. In a unanimous vote, it denied the permit.

“It may have passed if they had communicated, listened to concerns, and found common ground with the communities and the people — rather than assuming they would be able to do it without working with the communities,” said Smith.

Weighing the benefits

Berry, who chairs the Maine Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, said he perceives a disconnect between the motives of investor-owned utilities like Avangrid Central Maine Power (CMP) and its parent company, Iberdrola, which are generally guaranteed a profit on new transmission projects, and environmentalists and local residents, who say those profits often come at the expense of the natural landscapes and local communities they run through.

Legislation that Berry sponsored earlier this year would have replaced Avangrid CMP and the state’s other private utility, Versant Power, with a consumer-owned utility that would answer to local residents and businesses instead of shareholders. Governor Janet Mills vetoed the bill in July, although it won bipartisan majorities in both the House and Senate. Supporters are planning to put the proposal before voters in a referendum next year.

In early November, voters approved a statewide ballot initiative to block further construction of the NECEC line. The law would take effect in early January. Meanwhile, Avangrid CMP has filed a lawsuit claiming the referendum was unconstitutional.

The project’s developers, for their part, have touted the benefits that it will offer the local economy. In a media release last January, Avangrid CMP said the project would create 1,600 well-paying jobs during construction and provide \$200 million in upgrades to Maine’s energy grid, improving reliability.

“This is a huge economic stimulus — it means jobs and property taxes and a whole other package of benefits, but also cleaner air for Maine,” Thorn Dickin-son, chief executive of NECEC Transmission LLC, the CMP-owned subsidiary that is building the line, told *Energywire* last August.

Berry said he isn’t necessarily opposed to building new transmission or using land to scale up renewables in Maine to help the state decarbonize. He said he hopes Maine can foster more jobs, through new renewable generation, than NECEC would create. But he emphasized that development needs to be compatible with farming, fishing, forestry, and other local industries that are dependent on the state’s natural resources, and needs to avoid exacerbating the climate effects of cutting down trees that sequester carbon. The current conflict might have been avoided had developers planned to build over existing rights-of-way instead of clear-cutting through remote forest, he added.

If NECEC is ultimately halted, Massachusetts could

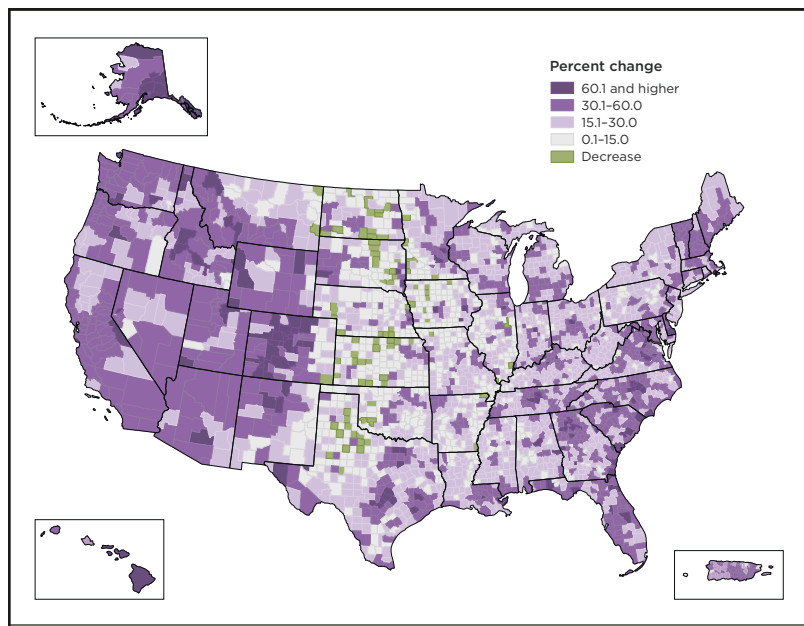
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Age-Friendly States Respond to Changing Demographics

BY SHIRLEY GIROUARD

Our state populations are getting older. The number of U.S. adults aged 65 and older was approximately 50 million in 2019 and is expected to grow to almost 95 million by 2060, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. During the past decade, CSG East member states, territories, and provinces have experienced significant increases in the number of older adults in their populations. According to some rankings, the CSG East region includes 10 of the 12 oldest jurisdictions in the United States.

As this trend continues in both urban and rural areas, policymakers will be challenged to address the needs of this new demographic. A recent study from AARP found that 76 percent of older Americans wanted to live in their current home or another one in the community as long as they could, although more than half felt they could not afford to do so. Many older adults, especially in rural areas, may be poor and have complex health problems that are affected by “social determinants of health” — which refer to the economic and social conditions in the places where people live and work that influence health risks and outcomes. Examples include lack of adequate housing, food insecurity, and transportation challenges.



Percent change among 65 and older population, 2010 – 2019

The opportunity

Although it is well documented that older adults contribute socially and economically to society long after retirement, their contributions are often overlooked. Older adults purchase goods and services, volunteer, mentor, donate to charity, look after grandchildren, serve as caregivers for family and neighbors, and provide support to others in the community. Governments are becoming increasingly aware that they need to better serve their older constituents by investing in “age-friendly communities.” These communities aim to enhance the health, independence, and well-being of older adults, and in doing so, have the added benefit of reducing the costs of their health care and other services.

A framework for change

The AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities uses a model created by the World Health Organization to provide opportunities for states, territories, and communities to address the aging demographic. According to this model, creating environments that are truly age-friendly requires action in many sectors: health, long-term care, transport, housing, labor, social protection, information, and communication. It also calls for action among multiple levels of government, and by service providers, civil society, older people and their organizations, families, and friends.

All of CSG East’s member jurisdictions participate in at least one age-friendly initiative. During the 2021 virtual CSG East Annual Meeting in August, officials from New York (designated AARP’s first age-friendly state), the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Ontario discussed their efforts to develop and implement policies and programs to better serve their older populations.

CSG East members are also participating in the Age-Friendly Health Systems initiative, a program of the Hartford Foundation, the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, the American Hospital Association, and the Catholic Hospital Association of the United States. Age-Friendly Health Systems demonstrate a core commitment to integrating into their care the “four M’s”: a focus on what matters; ensuring medication safety; enhancing mobility; and addressing mentation, or mental activity.

Investments in policies and programs that foster the health and well-being of older adults are wise investments for all of society. The CSG East Health Committee will facilitate the sharing of age-friendly actions taken by members, provide information, and sponsor future forums and discussions. ■

For more information, please contact CSG East Health Policy Consultant Shirley Girouard: Health-East@csg.org.

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still opt for a slightly more expensive alternative proposal to tie to the Québec grid, said Berry. The project, the New England Clean Power Link, is a fully permitted DC line that would be buried under Lake Champlain and under existing roads, and would not require cutting down trees. It would provide more than twice the financial benefits to the host state as what Maine and New Hampshire have been offered, he added.

“If we really do need to bring more power over high-voltage lines, let’s at least do it in a way that’s going to be more sensitive to the environmental impacts,” said Berry. “We can also be developing wind farms and solar farms and storage projects and offshore wind here and doing it in a thoughtful way and creating more jobs and value at home.”

Recently in New York, Governor Kathy Hochul announced two new transmission projects that aim to minimize local disruptions in delivering clean power to New York City. The lines would be buried under water bodies — including Lake Champlain and the Hudson River — and travel over existing rights-of-way for most of their routes.

Exploring collaborative approaches

At the federal level, the Biden administration has made clear that reforming transmission policy will be key to achieving its target of having all utilities generate their power from carbon-free resources by 2035.

In June, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) established a joint state-federal task force to encourage collaboration on new projects and to identify strategies for developing new transmission to meet state and federal policy goals. Although the authority to regulate transmission line construction largely rests with the states, FERC is responsible for regulating interstate transmission of electricity and can provide financial incentives to energy companies to propose and build transmission lines.

One sector that is considered ripe for collaboration is offshore wind. Currently some 30 gigawatts are planned in federal waters up and down the East Coast by 2035 — enough energy to power 20 million homes — which could require an investment of up to \$20 billion in new transmission, according to the Business Network for Offshore Wind, an industry group.

A report last year from the Brattle Group found that a planned transmission system off the coasts of New York and New England states serving multiple wind farms would reduce costs and lower impacts on fisheries and marine ecosystems.

“I think Maine and New Hampshire really have to be thoughtful for the precedents we’re setting. Are we going to be used

as the source of more wealth extraction for others, or are we going to be lifted up and empowered as a result of the transition to clean energy?”

Maine state Representative Seth Berry



Credit: Susan Tuttle

Earlier this year, New Jersey announced that it would pursue a novel pathway called a “state-agreement approach” to building transmission, which allows the regional grid operator, PJM, to solicit transmission proposals on behalf of a state or group of states to partner and pay for a system that would meet public policy requirements. Rather than creating an individual grid infrastructure for each offshore wind farm, which is typical in Europe, state regulators are hoping to enable interconnections between offshore substations using “open access” transmission, sometimes called a transmission “backbone.”

In the coming year, the CSG East Energy and Environment Committee will continue to convene dialogues to assist officials with the monumental energy transition that is underway. ■

CSG East Launches the State Legislative Climate Alliance

The alliance, formed by the CSG East Energy and Environment Committee, provides members with nonpartisan education and best practices to help them address the challenges posed by climate change. Recent events include a two-day virtual conference on carbon sequestration; a virtual discussion on offshore wind with experts from the United Kingdom; and a briefing from Massachusetts’ top energy and environmental official on the state’s efforts to reduce carbon emissions in line with new targets approved by the state Legislature in March. “The alliance offers an exciting opportunity for state government climate leaders to ultimately help shape the future of our climate and clean energy strategies at every level of government,” said the alliance’s chair, Massachusetts state Senator Marc Pacheco, co-chair of the CSG East Energy and Environment Committee and “dean” of the Massachusetts Senate. For more information, please contact Rona Cohen, program manager, CSG East Energy and Environment Program: rcohen@csg.org.

Solving the Infrastructure Investment Challenge

BY STEVE HEWITT, DON HANNON, AND RONA COHEN



Credit: Canva

The Newport Bridge in Rhode Island. More than 20 percent of the state's bridges are structurally deficient – the worst proportion in the nation.

The nation's infrastructure, once a model of modern engineering and a critical driver of economic growth, is in crisis.

Last March, the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) gave the nation's infrastructure a C– in its quadrennial report card, which assesses the state of 17 categories, including roadways, bridges, ports, the energy grid, and stormwater infrastructure. “It’s certainly not a grade that you’d be proud of,” ASCE Executive Director Tom Smith told CNN in March.

The latest assessment reflects a steady disinvestment over the past several decades. Current spending on infrastructure, as a percentage of the nation's gross domestic product, is at its lowest level since the Eisenhower era. The impacts can be felt throughout the economy, in terms of longer travel times over poorly maintained roads, unreliable energy and water utilities, and higher costs for businesses to manufacture and distribute goods.

Soon after taking office, President Joe Biden announced proposals to shore up the nation's roads, bridges, highways, and other staples of a modern

economy, but there has been considerable debate about how to pay for the improvements. ASCE estimates a price tag of \$6.1 trillion to meet the nation's infrastructure needs by 2030 and expects that federal, state, and county governments will contribute \$3.5 trillion, leaving a \$2.6 trillion gap. Coming up with the difference will require transformative action from Congress, states, and the private sector, ASCE warns.

One potential solution that is generating attention at the federal level is the concept of a national infrastructure bank. Congress is considering several bills, including HR 3339, which would create a \$5 trillion national infrastructure bank that would initially be seeded with \$500 billion in U.S. Treasury holdings from private investors.

A revenue-neutral funding source

During a virtual meeting of the CSG East Transportation Committee in August, Alphecca Muttardy, an adviser to the Coalition for a National Infrastructure Bank, an advocacy group, said the bank would offer a “revenue neutral” way to bring in more private funding

and serve as an alternative to raising gasoline taxes or other mechanisms to pay for improvements. Muttardy said the bank would lend money the same way a commercial bank does — but at significantly lower interest rates. States and local governments could seek loans to meet their infrastructure needs and repay the loans with general revenues, user fees, tolls, or capital budget funds. As the infrastructure projects are completed and the loan repayments are made, the funds are returned to the system to generate more infrastructure loans.

Muttardy, a macroeconomist who worked at the International Monetary Fund for 25 years, said the coalition's plan envisions implementing forward-thinking infrastructure projects that embrace broad public policy goals and go beyond merely fixing things. These projects could include building high-speed rail to reduce traffic congestion and pollution from tailpipes; repairing outmoded sewer systems that overflow during rainstorms and are a significant source of water pollution; and bundling projects to create efficiencies, such as replacing the aging, lead drinking water pipes that are buried beneath many northeastern roadways before the roads themselves are fixed.

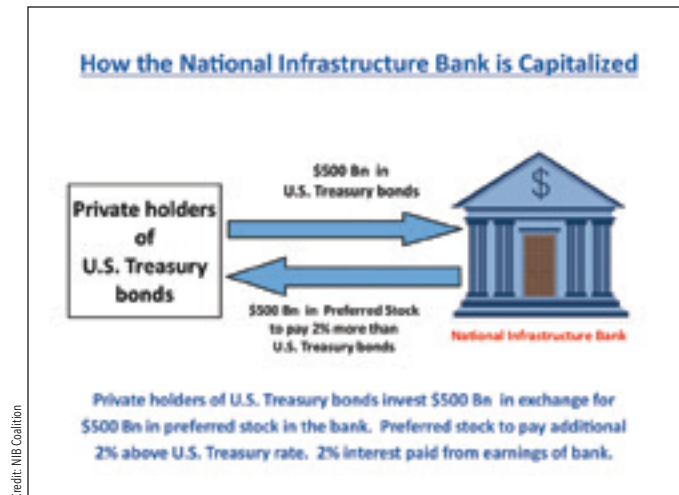
Muttardy said the \$1 trillion bipartisan Senate infrastructure proposal approved in August falls far short of the capital needed to finance all of the upgrades. The national infrastructure bank would make up the difference.

"The idea here is this bank will top up whatever Congress manages under the baseline spending for transportation and provide enough to finance everything," she said.

Proponents say the bank would create up to 25 million jobs and work with state and municipal governments to invest in a wide range of projects, including roads, bridges, and transit; transmission; dams, waterways, and ports; airports; rail; total broadband access; drinking water and wastewater systems; and hazardous and solid waste.

"What we know is that for every dollar that these entities would borrow for an infrastructure project, that would plow \$3 to \$7 back into the economy," said Muttardy.

In her presentation, Muttardy noted that the bank is modeled on four previous public institutions that have financed infrastructure projects since the nation's founding. In the 18th century, President George Washington and Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton



created the First Bank of the United States to finance roads, bridges, canals, and industrial centers. During the mid-20th century, the Reconstruction Finance Corporation underwrote the New Deal's massive public works projects and helped finance the U.S. involvement in World War II, she said.

State infrastructure banks

For the past 25 years, states have had experience administering revolving infrastructure investment funds, known as state infrastructure banks (SIB), which offer loans and credit enhancement products to public and private sponsors of certain highway construction, transit, and railroad projects.

In 1995, Congress established a state infrastructure bank pilot program, and since then 33 states have created SIBs, but only about a dozen states have actively

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EASTERN LEADERSHIP



The Eastern Leadership Academy Class of 2021

Credit: Scott Spitzer Photography

Sharpen Your Skills

The Robert J. Thompson Eastern Leadership Academy (ELA) offers officials and staff from all three branches of state and provincial government a unique opportunity to hone their leadership and communication skills and network with colleagues from the Eastern region.

Located in the heart of Philadelphia, and working in cooperation with the University of Pennsylvania's Fels Institute of Government, the unique five-day program includes workshops and hands-on training with experts from academia as well as the public and private sectors. ELA offers strategies tailored to the challenges facing public officials every day, in areas including resolving conflicts, fostering civil discourse, and mastering social media and branding, in a focused setting that promotes experiential learning.

ELA is designed to help you:

- **Develop leadership skills.** Through a series of hands-on group workshops ranging from consensus building to media relations, ELA provides training to sharpen and develop the skills you need to become an effective leader.
- **Improve your understanding of key regional issues.** ELA is the only leadership academy designed exclusively for Eastern regional officials from all three branches. Scholars from the Fels Institute of

Government and outside experts provide a context for you to effectively evaluate information, communicate your message successfully with constituents and colleagues, and develop strategies for relating to the media and the public.

- **Network with the best and brightest.** ELA convenes some of the most promising state officials from across the region to share knowledge and to learn from one another's experiences. ■

Here is what the 2021 graduates are saying about ELA:

"ELA is a fantastic week of pragmatic training on skills you'll never learn in a webinar or continuing education course. The academy takes you on the path from legislator to legislative leader and empowers you with the skills to be highly effective."

Rhode Island state Representative Barbara Ann Fenton-Fung

"The Robert J. Thompson Leadership Academy was the most impactful experience I've had since becoming a state legislator. The networking was amazing, and the topics of discussion were enlightening."

Maryland state Delegate Brenda Thiam

"This was an incredible experience. The leadership training program helps elevate your game and leadership qualities."

New Jersey Assemblyman Sterley Stanley

"The Robert J. Thompson Leadership Academy provided me with the time, space, and collegiality to step back and consider the big picture of my service. I thank CSG East and all of my new colleagues, and I will recommend the program to my colleagues in Maine."

Maine state Representative Erin Sheehan

From the ELA 2021 Class President: Reggie Parson

Since I was a child, public service was something that I knew intuitively I wanted to do. Growing up on the South Side of Chicago, I would memorize the names of the individuals who appeared on U.S. currency and would ask my mother to quiz me, beginning with George Washington all the way to Benjamin Franklin.

In September 2019 I began working in the Maine House Speaker's Office, and to this day I ask myself: How did I get here? How was I so lucky to be chosen to work with such talented professionals — whether partisan or nonpartisan staff — working to make the lives of Mainers better? In my time so far, I have seen the true impact when people invest in governing and making government work. However, with any government there is always room for improvement, and this is where the Eastern Leadership Academy (ELA) comes into play.

In today's political climate, we are divided on many issues. The ELA conference was an excellent opportunity to slow down the partisanship, collabo-

rate, and learn from one another about how to deal with issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic, social justice, the climate, the economy, education, health care, and agriculture. The 2021 ELA class also learned from experts in social media, crisis management, and legislative negotiation — just to name a few.



Credit: University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh Marketing and Communications

The biggest takeaway for me from ELA was how much fun we had in one another's presence and how the partisan walls were shattered to the point where it did not matter if we were Republicans or Democrats; we were just people who enjoyed public service. I truly wish the

experience I had was replicated in our public discourse today.

This conference was a reminder that democracy, leadership, and governing are hard. Regardless of whether states are entrenched in divided government or whether one party has control, decisions have to be made, and those decisions are crucial to life and liberty. This is why elections are so important. The point of the conference was not to learn how to avoid hard conversations or how to always hold hands and sing in harmony on issues, but to learn to have an open dialogue in a more productive way than what we see in our current public discourse.

I look forward to taking much of what I learned back to Maine to make our state government better. I am so thankful to have met many other dedicated public servants and look forward to cultivating those relationships that I hope will breed lifelong friendships. ■

Reggie Parson is a senior legislative aide and policy analyst in the Speaker's Office in the Maine House of Representatives.



Credit: Dylan McDowell

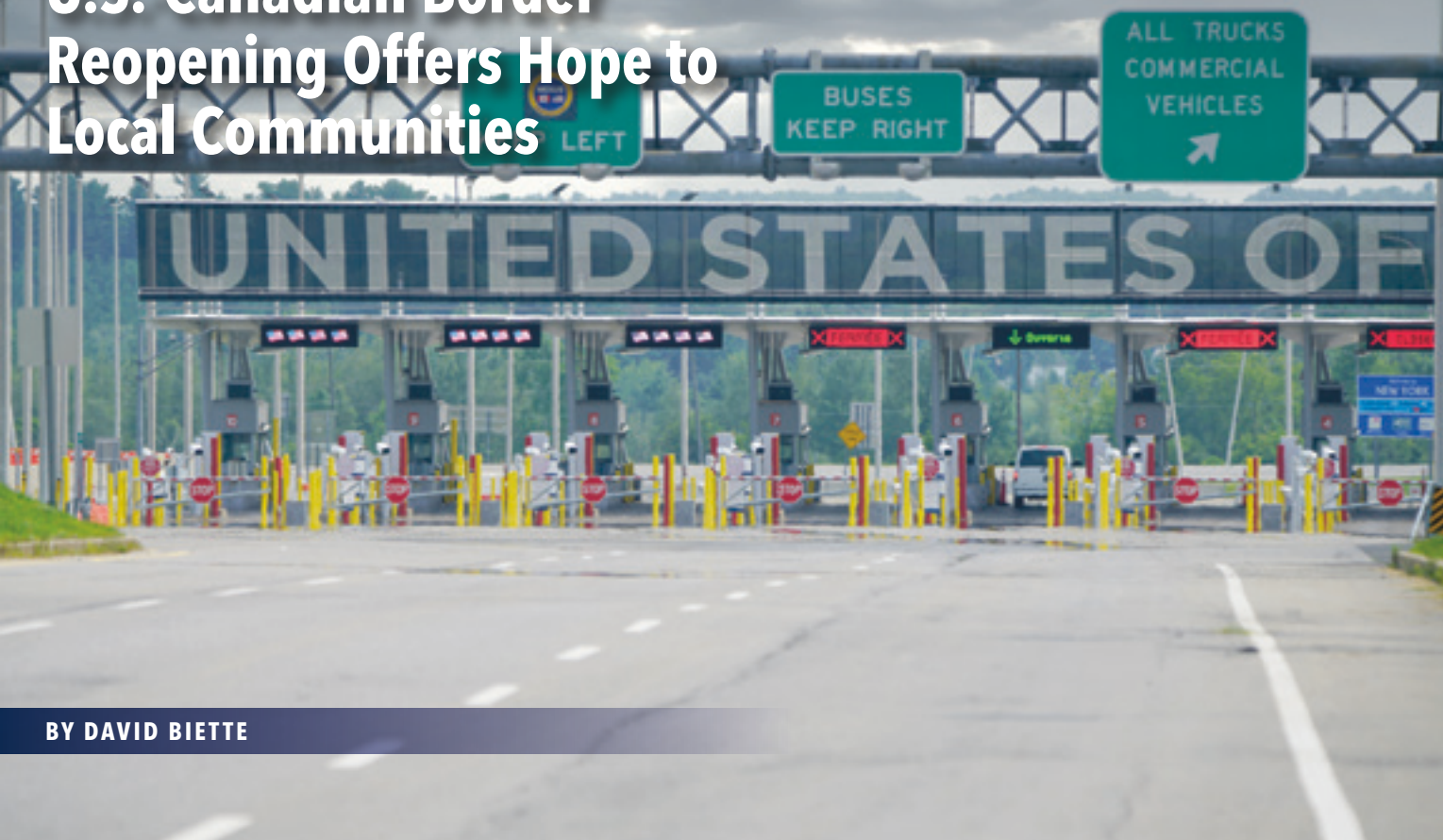
LEFT: Maryland state Delegate Regina Boyce, Vermont state Senator Thomas Ira Chittenden, and Pennsylvania state Representative Danilo Burgos explore strategies to overcome impasse during an interactive workshop led by Naseem Khuri, an adjunct assistant professor of international negotiations at The Fletcher School at Tufts University. Khuri, who has worked with Israeli and Palestinian diplomats and with human rights organizations in Northern Ireland, encouraged participants to explore the four most common "traps" that prevent effective collaboration and dialogue: assumptions, competition, advocacy without inquiry, and reaction. Afterward, participants said the real-world scenarios encouraged them to think outside the box. "It forced us to ask tough questions," said Gabrielle Hanson, a researcher for the Massachusetts House of Representatives.

RIGHT: Maryland House of Delegates Speaker Adrienne Jones joined a panel of ELA fellows to explore the challenges of leading and legislating. Jones, who won the 2021 W. Paul White Regional Leadership Award, has broken barriers in Maryland since she was first elected to the House in 1997. "I wasn't sure it was for me at first," Jones said. "There weren't many other women of color, or even Black delegates in general." In the 23 years since, she has risen to the highest office in the Maryland House of Delegates, becoming both the first African American and the first woman to serve as speaker. Jones is also a founding member of the CSG East Council on Communities of Color.



Credit: Dylan McDowell

U.S.-Canadian Border Reopening Offers Hope to Local Communities



BY DAVID BIETTE

The closure of the U.S.-Canadian border took a heavy toll on local retail and tourism industries.

When the United States closed its land border with Canada to nonessential travel in March 2020, the move completely disrupted a way of life for those living in nearby communities. Families were separated, local businesses suffered, and people who had second properties across the border were prohibited from visiting them for over a year.

Although air travel into the United States was never closed to Canadians, the quarantine requirements they faced upon their return to Canada served as an enormous disincentive to fly back and forth across the border. Merchandise truck travel, deemed essential, continued to cross, but border communities could no longer count on consumers and tourists to boost their economies. And the closed border prevented CSG East from holding its planned 2021 Annual Meeting in Toronto. (It has been rescheduled for August 2023.)

The border closure was devastating to Québec's tourism industry in 2020, with average spending from international tourists in Montréal down over 90 percent, according to Tourism Montréal, a nonprofit. In its more-than-100-year history, the organization had

never recorded such record lows for entries at Québec's borders, at the Montréal-Trudeau airport, and in hotel occupancy rates.

U.S. border states were hit hard as well. Passenger vehicle crossings that fuel Maine's local economy and sustain the state's retail and tourism industries averaged a 90 percent monthly decline from March to December 2020. The state typically sends 58 percent of its total exports to the Canadian market; in 2020, exports there fell by 12.9 percent.

In August, the CSG East U.S.-Canada Relations Committee passed a resolution calling for the border to reopen safely — something that New York Assemblyman Billy Jones, the committee co-chair, and his border colleagues had advocated for months. Jones represents New York's North Country, a region covering seven upstate counties spanning from the eastern shore of Lake Ontario to the western shore of Lake Champlain. Last year, the North Country Chamber of Commerce reported a \$310 million decline in tourism and retail spending in the region and a \$12 million decrease in sales tax revenue.

To elected officials who represent communities near the U.S.-Canada border, the U.S. government's recent announcement that it would open the land border in November to those who are vaccinated provides a light at the end of the tunnel.

As of November 8, the United States is requiring proof of vaccination only from international travelers, but the Canadian government still has a testing requirement in place for visitors to Canada and Canadians returning home, with no end in sight. Regulations require visitors to show proof of vaccination and a negative COVID-19 test taken within 72 hours of the trip, according to the

North Country Chamber of Commerce.

Jones is hopeful. "So many families have been separated due to this border closure, and so many local businesses have missed their Canadian customers; it is well beyond time that they be reunited." He added that people who own second properties on the other side of the border can finally return to them after more than 19 months. "The border closure was more than just an inconvenience for border communities like ours. The closure completely disrupted our way of life, and I look forward to welcoming our northern neighbors back to the North Country." ■

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used them to finance highway infrastructure. From 2007 to 2016, these SIBs provided \$200 million in average annual financing for highway infrastructure, but this accounts for only about 1 percent of the federal highway and mass transit funding that state and local governments received each year, according to testimony provided in May to the U.S. Senate Finance Committee from Joseph Kile, director of microeconomic analysis at the Congressional Budget Office. However, many states that have utilized their state bank investment programs have been able to stretch their state and federal dollars to meet some of the demands on financing critically needed infrastructure projects.

At least 17 state legislatures have introduced resolutions in support of the national infrastructure bank bill. The Rhode Island Senate approved a resolution this year, S 0029, which was co-sponsored by the CSG East Transportation Policy Committee vice chair, Rhode Island state Senator Louis DiPalma. The resolution notes that 22 percent of Rhode Island's bridges are structurally deficient — the worst proportion in the nation; many rural roads are in poor condition; and the distribution network for the state's largest water treatment facility, which is nearly 100 years old, has higher lead concentrations than are permitted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

"Everybody agrees we have to fix our crumbling infrastructure; the problem is nobody knows how to pay for it. The national infrastructure bank will supercharge our industry and small businesses," said DiPalma.

States throughout the CSG East region face similar infrastructure challenges to Rhode Island. The needs of

"What we know is that for every dollar that these entities would borrow for an infrastructure project, that would plow \$3 to \$7 back into the economy."

—Alphecca Muttardy, Coalition for a National Infrastructure Bank

CSG members from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are significant as well, given the ongoing fiscal and logistical challenges that have plagued the rebuilding efforts following the devastation from Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017.

Critics of the current proposals have expressed concern that there could be a bias toward building new projects rather than tackling current maintenance needs.

In its report, the ASCE warns that the nation will pay a steep price if it fails to act: By 2039, continued underinvestment in infrastructure will cost the United States \$10 trillion in gross domestic product, which amounts to a \$3,300 charge for the average American household and 3 million in lost jobs.

"The time to act is now," said DiPalma. "Delaying any longer will result in increased costs, as many projects will be beyond repair and require full replacement." ■

Apprenticeships: A Model for Kick-starting a Labor Market Recovery

BY DINA KLIMKINA



Credit: Canva

CSG provides support for states to implement apprenticeship programs, which have been effective tools for strengthening the pipeline of workers for fast-growing industries.

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the global workforce, causing millions of people to leave their jobs. In recent months, as hiring has picked up, numerous sectors, including schools, health care, construction trades, and information technology, have faced worker shortages. Solving these workforce challenges will be essential for states, communities, and employers to regain their economic footing.

Much of the solution lies in strengthening the pipeline of trained workers, and one effective tool has been apprenticeship programs. These programs provide the public and private sectors with mechanisms for combining on-the-job training and classroom instruction to help the apprentice master the necessary skills to succeed. Employees benefit because apprenticeships lead to high-quality and lucrative careers, and states and communities benefit because apprenticeships are efficient paths to rebuilding and upskilling their workforce, engaging new business sectors, and helping economies recover.

Over the past year, numerous states throughout the CSG East region have leveraged this work-based training tool to expand career opportunities for all workers

and engage with new industries, employers, and priorities. The region has been a national leader in developing state task forces to improve apprenticeships, receiving substantial federal funding for apprenticeship development, and launching cutting-edge exploratory apprenticeship programs for new industries.

To support efforts in the eastern United States and beyond, CSG has worked to grow opportunities for programmatic and policy support around apprenticeships. In July, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) awarded CSG \$4 million in funding to establish the Data and Best Practices Registered Apprenticeship Technical Assistance Center of Excellence. The center is dedicated to helping states and other apprenticeship stakeholders improve data-based systems and policy solutions in order to expand, strengthen, and improve the apprenticeship ecosystem. Further, with funding from CSG's 21st Century Foundation, CSG has also established a civic sector apprenticeship consortium to develop and implement public sector apprenticeship programs in six states. The work of the consortium will culminate with an event at the 2021 CSG National Conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where states will

hear from workforce experts and develop an action plan for the development of apprenticeships in their state. CSG has also published a number of resources and publications to support states in their apprenticeship efforts.

What are apprenticeships?

An apprenticeship is a high-quality career pathway where individuals can obtain paid work experience, classroom instruction, and a portable, nationally recognized credential, and employers can develop and prepare their future workforce.

Apprenticeships provide states the opportunity to develop a trained workforce pipeline to meet the needs of current employers and to develop the talent pool necessary to recruit new businesses. For workers, participation in apprenticeship programs provides valuable career skills while accruing little to no educational debt. This results in lower rates of unemployment and mitigates the long-term effects of economic recessions. In fact, 92 percent of apprentices retain employment in their field upon completion of the program, and the average apprentice will enter the workforce with a starting salary of \$72,000. On average, individuals who complete these programs will earn over \$300,000 more in lifetime earnings, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

Apprenticeships traditionally have focused on trade occupations such as electricians, boilermakers, ironworkers, and plumbers. However, in recent years, the use of apprenticeships has expanded into many other industries, including health care, green energy, hospitality, information technology, cybersecurity, and public sector employment. With the support of the DOL, many states have taken steps to accelerate apprenticeship development across the country, including funding expanded career opportunities for all workers, especially those in underrepresented populations.

Apprenticeship programs in the eastern United States

Several states in the CSG East region are at the forefront of aggressive apprenticeship expansion. Here are some examples of their efforts:

1. Enacting legislation to improve workforce development

In 2018, the administration of New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy published a report calling for the state to increase the number of apprenticeship programs based on German, Austrian, and Swiss

models; develop a holistic, people-first support system for professional development; and invest in innovative, sustainable jobs of the future. Consequently, the state enacted legislation that established a statewide task force to diversify apprenticeships and a five-year Apprentice Assistance and Support Services Pilot Program; encouraged high school students to engage in apprenticeship training early in their education; and allocated funding for a High Growth Industry Regional Apprenticeship Development Grant Pilot Program. The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development also distributed more than \$3 million among 12 organizations to foster apprenticeship opportunities that will lead to the hiring of 1,264 new apprentices.

2. Utilizing American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to enhance workforce development and apprenticeship programming

In April, Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont proposed allocating \$93.5 million of ARPA funds for job training programs in high-demand and high-growth sectors, including health care, manufacturing, information technology, and business and financial services. The initiative includes substantial funding for apprenticeship programs.

Vermont House Bill 439 (2021) allocates \$2 million in ARPA funds to expand registered apprenticeship enrollment in current or new programs. The bill, which was signed into law by Governor Phil Scott in June, also transfers \$100,000 to the Vermont Department of Labor for a pre-apprenticeship program in early childhood education provided by Vermont career and technical education centers.

3. Leveraging other federal funding to develop apprenticeship opportunities for historically underrepresented populations

Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island have received State Apprenticeship Expansion, Equity and Innovation grants from the U.S. DOL — ranging from \$3.9 million to \$10 million — to expand programming and inclusive recruitment strategies to attract a diverse workforce. In a media release in June, U.S. Labor Secretary Marty Walsh said that increased funding opportunities for apprenticeships “[reflect] the Department of Labor’s renewed commitment to expanding Registered Apprenticeship to train U.S. workers and ensure

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ETC's Virtual Trade Mission to Africa Opens Doors for Northeastern Companies

BY RONA COHEN

A container ship in the port of Durban, South Africa. In June, 10 companies from six ETC states met with prospective clients in Botswana, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, and South Africa. "I've done eight virtual trade missions over the last year around the world, and this one was the most successful," said Beth Pomper, Delaware's director of international business development.

Last fall, with international borders closed to stem transmission of the coronavirus, CSG's Eastern Trade Council (ETC) saw an opportunity.

During an ETC board meeting, Zeynep Turk, senior trade specialist at the Maine International Trade Center, raised the idea of a virtual trade mission to sub-Saharan Africa, a region with some of the world's fastest-growing economies but few trade ties with companies in the Northeast. Africa's rising middle class is young, tech-savvy, and entrepreneurial, but its markets have gone unexplored by many U.S. businesses, owing partly to concerns about safety.

Turk knew that some of those fears were overblown and felt there were opportunities that local exporters should not ignore. She understood how virtual trade missions might open doors to new markets that companies might be wary of visiting in person. Turk asked the board, "Why not take this opportunity in a year when we can't travel, and explore a market that's a bit more challenging?"

The other board members threw their support behind the idea. "Africa needs a lot of things as a continent,

and there are a lot of opportunities in Africa for U.S. products and services as a whole," said ETC board member Beth Pomper, who directs international trade for the state of Delaware.

ETC hired Zurcom International, an export promotion firm based in South Africa that had worked with trade offices in several ETC states. The company has staff based in 20 African countries. Zurcom provided prospective participants with an overview of African industries and business culture, identified appropriate business contacts, and guaranteed each participating company at least five virtual meetings.

Over the course of the month of June, 10 companies from six ETC states met with prospective clients in Botswana, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, and South Africa. They worked in sectors including agriculture, information technology, and security systems. The fee for participation was \$3,500 per company, though the state trade offices arranged to have some or all of the fee covered through the federal State Trade Export Promotion grant program, which offers states matching funds to help

small businesses enter foreign markets.

In a report issued following the mission, Zurcom said many companies found value in the connections they made, despite some communications challenges. A brief COVID-19 lockdown in South Africa during the mission forced some businesses to rely on cell phone connections. In a few countries, Internet service was spotty. Pomper said these glitches did not impede Delaware businesses from generating important leads. “I’ve done eight virtual trade missions over the last year around the world, and this one was the most successful,” she said.

Among the five participating Delaware companies was Smart Kidz Clubs, whose app provides children and educators with access to a wide library of e-books. The company signed an agreement with a reseller in South Africa and was negotiating with another in Rwanda. Kango Express, a package forwarding company, was

also negotiating an agreement that resulted from its virtual meetings.

Pomper explained that she had planned to lead an in-person trade mission to Kenya, Tanzania, and South Africa in September to enable companies to follow up on these initial contacts and sign distribution agreements. But five weeks before the mission was scheduled to depart, those countries went into lockdown and the mission was converted into a virtual one. It is too soon to know how much business might ultimately result from these long-distance efforts. “It was so successful that we need to get there as quickly as possible, to have face-to-face meetings,” she said.

When Pomper does make it to Africa, it will be her first trade mission there. “It was ETC that started the ball rolling that got me thinking about Africa, and I appreciate it,” she said. “It’s the new ‘big.’” ■

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that diversity and inclusion are core elements of our nation’s post-pandemic economic recovery.”

The DOL also invested in four Registered Apprenticeship Technical Assistance Centers of Excellence to support apprenticeship programs and their enrolled trainees. CSG is partnering on two of the centers, which allows CSG to provide additional supports and services directly to CSG East members. The centers also will support the work of the CSG Education and Workforce Committee by providing best practices; data; and access to resources on workforce development and other intersecting issues, such as education, equity and inclusion, and standards and practices in apprenticeship occupations.

4. Expanding apprenticeship opportunities into high-growth occupations, including the civic sector

The CSG Public Sector Apprenticeship Consortium works to equip and empower state policymakers — particularly legislators and executive cabinet staff in workforce development, education, and economic policy — to develop and implement public sector apprenticeships. The civic sector consortium is in its pilot year, with six states: California, Colorado, Idaho, Maine, Michigan, and Virginia. Maine has become a leader in developing innovative apprenticeship programs in the eastern United States. Maine has a two-year program for correc-

tional officers housed within the Maine State Correctional Facilities and Maine Department of Labor. The Maine Apprenticeship Program is currently working to develop apprenticeship programming with three additional state agencies: Health and Human Services, Transportation, and Labor. “Within the next three years, we would like to establish apprenticeship programming as a cultural norm within Maine state government,” said Jessica Crosby, director of talent management in the Bureau of Human Resources. Through the civic sector initiative, CSG will support CSG East members in developing their own civic sector apprenticeship programs, identifying opportunities for growth, and mitigating the “silver tsunami” of soon-to-be-retired government employees.

Apprenticeships provide an excellent opportunity to encourage economic expansion. While CSG East has been a leader in apprenticeships nationally, there are more opportunities for growth. CSG is here to support members in the eastern United States and nationally by providing a policy forum, vehicle for sharing best practices, and structure for advocacy on issues affecting the region. ■

For support, services, and resources on apprenticeships, workforce development, or any workforce or education policy, contact Dina Klimkina, program director at the CSG Center for Innovation: dklimkina@csg.org.

The 2021 CSG East Annual Meeting

CSG East and the province of Ontario were unable to host our 2021 Annual Meeting due to the closure of the land border between the United States and Canada, and so for the second year in a row, we moved our conference to a virtual platform. In mid-August all of our policy committees held virtual meetings, and we hosted several plenary sessions with provocative thinkers on a range of cutting-edge topics, whose presentations are discussed in these pages. You can access detailed information about the meeting and video recordings of individual sessions on our website.

The Movement Summit: Exploring the Cost of Racism and Searching for Equitable Governing Solutions

BY RONA COHEN

Four years ago, economist Heather McGhee embarked on a quest to explore the origins of racial discrimination and economic inequality in this country.

McGhee was seeking to understand how a nation that once enjoyed the largest middle class in human history had sunk into gross economic disparity, particularly for people of color, and sensed that there was an underlying cause that could not be explained by economics alone. Over the course of her three-year journey across America, McGhee found the culprit: a phenomenon that she calls “the big lie.”

That lie is a zero-sum worldview of economic advancement: the idea that progress for Black and Brown people must come at the expense of whites. In her book, *The Sum of Us*, McGhee explores the lie’s pervasiveness throughout the nation’s history, and explains that people of all races are paying an enormous price, including whites.

“It is a story that is sold by the elite in order to profit, and it is a story that ultimately is costing nearly everyone,” McGhee said during a virtual plenary address at the 2021 CSG East Annual Meeting in August.

In her book, McGhee explains that the idea of the zero sum was created by Southern colonial slaveholders in the late 1600s and sold to the poor, landless white majority in order to defuse class conflict. During Bacon’s rebellion, Black slaves and white indentured servants burned Jamestown to the ground, nearly overthrowing the elite colonial government. Afterwards, lawmakers doled out privileges to poor whites to create divisions from Blacks and earn their allegiance, to prevent the two groups from joining forces again. This tactic worked: poor whites began to identify with their elevated position in the new racial hierarchy and

overlook their low status in the class hierarchy. “And so, the zero sum was born,” she said.

The big lie explained to McGhee why the majority of white America stopped supporting popular, robust social programs in the early 1960s. She recalled that during the 1963 March on Washington, two core demands drew Black activists’ support: a national job guarantee and a national living wage. That year, President John F. Kennedy firmly associated the party of the New Deal with civil rights.

“White support for the New Deal public goods crumbled once it became clear that they would have to share those public goods with all the people who had contributed to this nation’s prosperity, including those people of color whom they had been taught to degrade, disdain, and distrust,” said McGhee. President Lyndon Johnson, who signed the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act, was the last Democratic presidential candidate to win the support of the majority of white voters.

The big lie could be seen in strategies like “redlining” to prevent Black families from obtaining mortgages to buy homes, and excluding agricultural and domestic workers — the two sectors in which Black and Brown workers dominated — from Social Security benefits. McGhee recounted how white residents of the Oak Park neighborhood of Montgomery, Alabama, chose to fill in their massive public pool and shutter their park system rather than integrate it. Afterwards, wealthy whites built their own pools or joined private clubs, but everyone else was left without a swimming pool.

McGhee sees “drained pool politics” in the lack of universal, affordable child care and health care, in crumbling infrastructure, in depressed wages, and in federal cuts to state university systems. The lack of

public amenities affects everyone, including the majority of whites, she said.

Over the course of her journey, McGhee realized that she had erred in her original belief that inequality was created by economic factors and accelerated by racism. “I had actually gotten it wrong. In many ways, racism in our politics and our policymaking was driving inequality, with costs for everyone.”

McGhee’s talk was sponsored by CSG East’s Council on Communities of Color as part of its Movement Summit, an ongoing series of dialogues between state and local policymakers and thought leaders in search of equitable governing solutions. The discussions were moderated by CSG East Senior Fellow Charles Ellison, who hosts the “Reality Check” show on Philadelphia-based WURD Radio.

Throughout the course of 2021, the summit addressed topics including the effort to provide financial and institutional restitution for Black communities through reparations, the value of historically Black colleges and universities for the next generation, and strategies for achieving higher vaccination rates in marginalized communities.

Voting rights

The summit kicked off in April with a discussion about the flurry of recent state proposals to make changes to voting rights and their potential impact on the landmark Voting Rights Act of 1965 and on Black, Brown, and Indigenous voters in communities nationwide. Hundreds of bills were introduced in nearly every U.S. state — a 600 percent increase compared to last year.

Panelists noted that laws restricting access to voting have a long legacy in this country, dating back to the post-Reconstruction era. Following passage of the 15th Amendment in 1870, which gave Black men the right to vote and led to a wave of Black elected officials, white lawmakers, threatened by the shift in political power, tried to hinder the Black vote with new laws designed to restrict access to the polls through poll taxes, literacy tests, and other measures. White supremacist groups tried to restrict Blacks from voting through terror and violence.

While recent state proposals do not specifically target voters of color, critics say provisions such as tighter voter identification requirements, restrictions on early voting, and the shuttering of polling stations would have the effect of limiting participation among members of communities of color.

Congress has been considering two federal bills,



Heather McGhee provided a virtual address to CSG East members during the 2021 Annual Meeting.

known as HR 1 and HR 4, which would strengthen voting protections.

The decline of Black farmers

In June, the summit explored the legacy of racial bias inherent in state and federal policies that have deprived Black farmers of their land over the course of the last century.

During a relatively brief period of time in the decades following the Civil War, Blacks were able to acquire farmland, which served as a source of wealth creation, stability, and security. By the early 20th century, Black land ownership blossomed, peaking at 16 million acres in 1910, which represented 14 percent of total farmland. In the decades since then, the number of Black farmers has plummeted — from 1 million to about 38,000 today — owing to a history of racist federal, state, and local policies, said Lloyd Wright, who served as director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Civil Rights Division in the late 1990s.

“They’re struggling and holding on by their fingernails,” he said.

Cornelius Blanding, executive director of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund, a nonprofit that comprises Black farmers and landowners, said that at USDA, racism was “baked into the system.” There was rampant racial bias in locally elected county committees, whose role is to certify the eligibility of farmers for USDA’s farm loan program; the committees typically denied loans or credit to Black farmers. Another challenge: Black farmers often lacked access to the legal system. This meant that most farms were handed down through the generations without a formal

The 2021 CSG East Annual Meeting

will or clear title. This “heirs property” might be split among multiple members in an extended family, leading to ownership disputes and forced sales of all or a portion of a property.

Blanding said the good news is that some of these challenges can be resolved through state laws. For example, 13 states have enacted legislation that reforms the rules governing inheritance of heirs property to prevent a co-owner from selling their portion without notifying the other heirs, who have the option to buy them out.

In Pennsylvania, state Representative Chris Rabb introduced legislation enacted in 2019 that created a state-level grant program to encourage farming of high-priority crops, including hops, hemp, and hardwood, that are not eligible for federal grant programs. The law sets aside 10 percent of grant funds for applicants from rural and urban communities that have had at least 20 percent of residents living in poverty for at least 30 years.

“These are ways to infuse equity and access,” said Rabb, though he argued that government needs to go even further by providing reparations to Black farmers.

Rabb recounted how all of his great-grandparents were born into slavery. Some of his ancestors had been purchased as a wedding gift for the wealthy Livingston

family, which bought a million acres of land in Dutchess County, New York, through the British Crown — land that had been stolen from Indigenous people, he said.

“I have a very interesting connection to the land and to our nation’s troubled history, but I also see hope,” said Rabb. “And part of that is talking to folks who understand this issue, and its complexity, and potential solutions.”

The power of cross-racial solidarity

Toward the end of her address to CSG East in August, McGhee said that her journey across America had given her hope as well. Virtually everywhere that she had visited, she met people who had rejected the zero sum and had forged “cross-racial coalitions” to fight for cleaner air, higher wages, and better-funded schools.

McGhee told the story of how longtime residents of the predominantly white, working-class community of Lewiston, Maine, have embraced African Muslim refugees who are revitalizing the town with small businesses. In Kansas City, she met a white, low-wage worker named Bridget who rejected her family’s anti-immigrant rhetoric to join forces with Black and Latino organizers to advocate to raise the minimum wage to \$15 from the \$7.25 that she was earning.

“She told me that one of the whole points of this movement is for white workers to realize that racism is bad for them too — because it keeps us divided from our Brown and Black brothers and sisters. As long as we’re divided, we’re conquered,” said McGhee.

“If Bridget, with all the challenges she faces, can see the power and strength in cross-racial solidarity, I think that our leaders can as well.” ■



Credit: Canva

Black farmers are “struggling and holding on by their fingernails,” said Lloyd Wright, former director of USDA’s Civil Rights Division, during a Movement Summit in June that explored the legacy of racial bias inherent in state and federal policies that have deprived Black farmers of their land over the course of the last century.



You can learn more about the CCC Movement Summit on CSG East’s website at <https://csg-erc.org/policies/council-on-communities-of-color/> and access recordings on the CCC YouTube page at <https://tinyurl.com/yyl4rpus>. For more information about CCC’s work, please contact CSG East Senior Policy Analyst Debbie-Ann Paige at dpaige@csg.org.

Untapped Talent: Creating Economic Opportunity for Refugee and Immigrant Professionals

BY DYLAN MCDOWELL

In the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, as states raced to expand health care capacity, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy signed an executive order that created a long-awaited opportunity for foreign-born health care professionals.

The order authorized New Jersey's Division of Consumer Affairs to grant temporary licenses to doctors licensed in foreign countries. It was a major breakthrough for advocates who have long pointed to immigrant and refugee professionals, especially those working in health care, as some of the nation's most underutilized workers. Granting temporary exceptions to strict testing and licensure requirements would, they argued, finally allow for a sorely needed influx of high-skill, ready-to-work physicians, nurses, and specialists.

In New Jersey, their predictions came true. Shortly after the ink dried on Executive Order 112, more than 1,100 foreign-born health care professionals applied, making New Jersey's effort one of the most successful in the nation in terms of applications received.

Now, these workers and their advocates are pushing for more permanent solutions to long-standing licensing hurdles and other barriers to entry. These outdated statutes, they argue, have driven a wedge between employers and the thousands of foreign-born workers seeking to apply their skills and fill critical work force shortages.

The issue — currently the subject of several state task forces and working groups — was explored in depth during the CSG East virtual Annual Meeting last August.

Work force shortages and the new Americans ready to fill them

In its report on “brain waste,” the Migration Policy Institute, a nonprofit, estimates that there are nearly 2 million immigrants and refugees with degrees that are unutilized or underutilized.

In health care, the report showed roughly 263,000 immigrants, refugees, asylees, and temporary residents who are authorized to work and have at least an undergraduate degree in the health care field but are currently unemployed or are employed in a job that requires no more than a high school diploma.

That's important, advocates say, because the need for these workers is growing more urgent over time.

According to data published by the Association of American Medical Colleges in June, the United States will face a shortage of up to 124,000 physicians by 2034.

During the CSG East panel, Lubab Al-Quraishi, a pathologist who fled Iraq in 2014, discussed the hurdles that prevented her from finding suitable employment in New Jersey.

“I was full of hope that I would continue [working in health care], because I have experience, training, and education,” said Al-Quraishi. “But, unfortunately, there were a lot of barriers, including financial barriers.”

Al-Quraishi, who worked for more than 10 years as a pathologist and physician in Baghdad, told WNYC in an interview earlier this year that she received a temporary license in New Jersey and, although she couldn't get a paying job, she used the license to volunteer in nursing homes, administering COVID-19 tests to residents.

As the temporary licenses granted under New Jersey's executive order expired, however, Al-Quraishi lost her ability to work as a physician. In the interim, she says, she found a job as a pathologist's assistant, and is currently saving money to be able to afford New Jersey's licensing exam.



Credit: Adobe Stock

Immigrant and refugee professionals, especially those working in health care, are some of the nation's most underutilized workers, studies show.

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“I can’t help feeling that it shouldn’t be this hard at a time when experts often sound the alert about the shortage of physicians in the U.S.,” Al-Quraishi wrote in an opinion piece published online in April.

She added that the issue goes far beyond undervaluing health care workers. “I have lost count of the foreign-trained engineers I have met working in Walmart or foreign-trained chemists driving taxis. A friend of mine is a brilliant math teacher from Turkey. But in the U.S., which has a shortage of math teachers, she isn’t able to serve her community with her teaching skills,” she wrote.

Slow progress toward a solution

Targeted barrier-reduction studies are underway in Georgia, Maine, Maryland, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and several other states, according to Mike Zimmer, senior policy consultant for World Education Services, a nonprofit.

“Licensing laws and requirements are often cited as a barrier to entry to a whole host of populations,” he said. “This has been exacerbated by the growth of licensing. In the ’50s, only 5 percent of the U.S. work force was required to be licensed to perform their duties. Currently, it is estimated that number has hit over 30 percent.”

And, while licensing requirements are chiefly intended to protect public health, in the past, they have been used to discriminate against people of color.

Zimmer cited a 1994 article from the *San Diego Law Review* that found that, historically, white interest groups used occupational licensing laws to stifle Black economic progress. “While generally not Jim Crow laws per se, the laws were used both in the South and the North to prevent blacks from competing with established white skilled workers,” the article found.

The statutes and the requirements that have evolved from them have created three top barriers that persist today, according to Zimmer: lack of U.S. work experience, nonrecognition of international work experience, and nonrecognition of foreign credentials.

While legislative solutions are slowly being tested around the country, many organizations are stepping up to offer immediate help to job seekers and state leaders alike.

World Education Services and New American Economy, an advocacy organization, have teamed up to

run an Office of New Americans, which provides state policy leaders an opportunity to share best practices to help immigrants fully integrate into their new communities. Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York are all members.

Advocacy organizations have also popped up in various states and cities to help immigrants and English learners adapt to their new communities through academic coaching and career counseling. The Washington Academy for International Medical Graduates, for example, provides these services as well as opportunities for clinical experience — a key step in meeting license requirements.

Maine as a national leader

As state leaders look to the future, Maine is emerging as a national leader in integrating immigrant families and workers. An influx of refugees from Somalia and some Central African countries has changed the landscape quickly in towns like Lewiston, which has suffered from population loss in the wake of deindustrialization.

State Representative Kristen Cloutier, whose district includes Lewiston, highlighted Maine’s revolving loan program to enable credentialing and skills recognition for foreign-born workers, established last year, and LD 149, legislation she sponsored to facilitate licensure for credentialed individuals from other jurisdictions.

“Because we have so many barriers in place, these individuals are forced to work in minimum-wage jobs and positions they aren’t excited about,” she explained. “That leads to depression, exhaustion, and an inability to get out of that cycle. The longer folks are kept in these lower-level positions, the worse it is for them and our economies, our states, and the country.”

LD 149, panelists at the CSG East conference noted, fulfills several key recommendations found in a report prepared for a joint state legislative committee. The report identifies barriers and recommends strategies for foreign-credentialed individuals to become part of Maine’s skilled work force.

“[These] are the kinds of skilled employees that Maine employers are really scrambling to recruit right now,” said Cloutier. “It’s highlighted in the governor’s 10-year economic strategy, and I just think that — considering Maine’s skilled labor shortage — supporting good employees is really a top priority.” ■

The Great Disruption: Tony Seba Rethinks Energy, Transportation, Food, and Agriculture

BY RONA COHEN

Tony Seba has a message for humanity: a massive technology disruption is underway, and it could offer a solution to the climate crisis.

Seba, a renowned futurist, author, and entrepreneur, studies how new technologies converge with innovative business models to forge new markets and destroy or diminish the existing ones.

Over the past decade, Seba has forecast with stunning accuracy the dramatic declines in the cost of wind, solar, and battery technologies, enabling them to increasingly displace coal, oil, and nuclear generation, and speed the adoption of electric vehicles. In a plenary address during the 2021 virtual CSG East Annual Meeting, Seba said these changes are just the start of a cascading series of disruptions that will unfold over the next 15 years and affect every major global industry, including materials, food, and agriculture.

“We’re on the cusp of the fastest, deepest, most consequential transformation, not just of any one sector, but also for civilization in [our] 10,000-year history,” said Seba. “We need to understand how these disruptions will unfold to be able to serve society better.”

Energy and transportation

When Seba analyzes a technology he looks at its cost-improvement curve, which shows its rate of advancement over time for a given dollar value. More than a decade ago, he observed that costs and capabilities for solar, wind, and battery storage were improving on consistent, predictable trajectories.

Seba has made some prescient observations: By 2020, subsidized solar power would be cheaper than subsidized coal, oil, and nuclear energy. Electric vehicles capable of traveling 200 miles to a charge would sell for prices below the median-priced gas-powered car in America. “Which of course at the time sounded insane,” he said. “Folks were predicting [it would be the] 2040s to 2050s before it happened. Guess what? It happened.”

Seba expects the costs of these technologies to slide an additional 70 percent by 2030, completely transforming energy and transportation. By then, electric vehicles will have displaced gas-powered vehicles, which won’t be able to compete on price. In his analysis, it will



According to Seba’s analysis, in the 2030s it will be cheaper to power the entire country with solar arrays, wind turbines, and battery storage than to maintain the current fossil-fuel-dominated electricity system.

be cheaper to build enough solar arrays, wind turbines, and battery storage to power the entire country than to maintain the current fossil-fuel-dominated electricity system. There will even be enough excess generation to power transportation and heat residential and commercial buildings as they become electrified.

“This is disruptive not just to electric power; it’s disruptive to all forms of energy,” he said.

Food as ‘software’

Seba warns that incumbent industries and mainstream analysts often don’t understand that disruption is occurring until it’s too late. It can happen with stunning speed; it’s exponential, not linear. According to Moore’s law, the overall processing power of a computer doubles every two years for the same dollar amount. Seba said the cost curve for biotechnology is growing exponentially faster, with dramatic implications for the way that food is produced.

“The new business model is what I call ‘food as software,’ because biotech and infotech have converged: you can design proteins just like you design applications

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"This will change everything. This will give us an opportunity to end poverty, and inequality, and environmental degradation. And we can make this happen in the 2030s."

– Tony Seba

or videos," said Seba. "It's a phase change to a new food system, and the possibilities are endless, even though the mainstream doesn't see it."

Here is what Seba sees: Modern food companies are creating dairy protein through precision fermentation — a process that enables researchers to program microorganisms to produce almost any complex organic molecule. Hundreds of companies are using cell-based production to make eggs, pork, chicken, fish, and beef — products made from animal cells grown in a bioreactor, but with the exact same genetic makeup.

By 2030, Seba expects these proteins to be 80 percent cheaper than animal proteins and claim an increasing share of the marketplace. He predicts that precision fermentation will replace cow protein used in protein shakes and bars — a market that makes up one-third of dairy industry revenues. That would be good news for consumers who may pay lower prices, but devastating to producers.

"If you disrupt just the protein shake and protein bar market, essentially the dairy industry goes into a financial tailspin," he said.

Seize the upside

Seba sees industry collapse as an inevitable consequence of technology-driven disruption. He is on a mission to alert policymakers so they can take steps to avert widespread suffering and raise living standards. His advice: create policies that will protect people, not legacy businesses with stranded assets.

One example is an "energy bill of rights" that would allow consumers to generate power from rooftop solar panels, store it in their own batteries, and sell it to others without needing permission from the utility.

Other policies would facilitate transportation that is autonomous, electric, and widely available to consumers on demand, thus eliminating the need for car ownership, which Seba estimates could save households almost \$6,000 a year.

"We need to seize the upside and mitigate the downside," he said.

The upside: dramatically reduced food and energy costs that could average as low as \$250 a month for households; a plunge in carbon emissions as we replace fossil fuels with solar, wind, and battery storage; and the possibility of reforesting land that is currently used for livestock so that it can sequester carbon — a strategy that Seba believes could offset all sources of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions by 2035.

"This will change everything. This will give us an opportunity to end poverty, and inequality, and environmental degradation. And we can make this happen in the 2030s," he said.

The downside: Wholesale changes in land use, particularly in the Midwest, could cause entire towns to lose their livelihoods. Workers in defunct industries — auto mechanics and producers of fossil fuels, livestock, and dairy — will need retraining and other support to transition to new industries.

Seba said these consequences present humans with a choice: embrace technological disruption and use it to our advantage, or resist it and risk social and economic chaos.

"We're facing many crises in the 2020s," Seba warned. "We can elevate America and humanity to amazing new levels of quality of life; but we have to be careful, because both the collapse and the breakthrough to a new system are possible." ■



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Credit: Canva

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