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Contact: Michael D. Jahr
Director of Communications
989-631-0900

Reed to Become President Emeritus of Mackinac Center; Board Unanimously Names Lehman Successor

MIDLAND —Lawrence W. Reed, president of the Mackinac Center for Public Policy throughout its 20-year history, will assume a new role as president emeritus of the Center effective Sept. 1, the Mackinac Center announced today. Joseph G. Lehman, currently the Center's executive vice president and chief operating officer, will succeed Reed as president, following a unanimous vote by the Center's board of directors on Tuesday.

Reed said he will have ongoing responsibilities with the Center and remain a member of its board of directors. At the same time, he will assume the presidency of the oldest free-market think tank in the United States, the Foundation for Economic Education.

"Larry's new role is the perfect way for him to provide continuing guidance for the institution he's helped build for 20 years, while reaching an even broader audience," said Richard McLellan, a founding Mackinac Center board member who continues to serve on the board.

Under Reed's leadership, the Mackinac Center has become one of the largest and most effective of the more than 40 state-based free-market think tanks in the country.

Reed also was pleased with the board's selection of Lehman. "Joe Lehman is my number one choice as successor," Reed said. "No one is better qualified and the transition will be as seamless and natural as one could imagine. I look forward to continuing our close partnership as he leads the Center into the future."

The board acknowledged that Lehman, who first joined the Mackinac Center staff in 1995 as director of communications, had the experience and expertise to continue to advance the Center as one of the premier free-market think tanks in the country and as a leading institution in the freedom movement.

“Joe Lehman was the board’s enthusiastic and unanimous choice,” said Joseph Olson, chairman of the board and another founding member. “He’s known throughout the country for his expertise in think tank management.”

Prior to his public policy career, Lehman was an engineer and project manager at The Dow Chemical Co. Lehman served as vice president for communications at the Cato Institute in Washington, D.C., and in 2000 returned to the Mackinac Center as executive vice president.

“There’s no better think tank job in the country, and there’s no state that needs our free-market ideas more than Michigan,” said Lehman. “We will continue to show how to fix Michigan’s fundamentals by expanding school choice, modernizing labor laws, aligning state spending to its core priorities, protecting property rights, repealing counterproductive regulations and ending economic development programs that produce more press releases than jobs.”

Twenty years ago, the Mackinac Center began with an \$80,000 budget and two employees. Today the Center has a more than \$4 million budget and 30 employees. The Center’s influence and impact have grown correspondingly. Through scholarly studies and educational programs, the Center has expanded school choice, become the main resource in the state for privatization information and furthered collective bargaining reforms, among other things.

Prior to becoming president of the Mackinac Center, Reed taught economics at Midland’s Northwood University from 1977 to 1984 and chaired the Department of Economics from 1982 to 1984. He directed a policy institute in Idaho from 1984 to 1987 before moving back to Michigan to lead the Mackinac Center. Since 1985, he has visited 69 countries on six continents, often meeting with top government officials and leading dissident figures. In 1984, he delivered his well-known “Seven Principles of Sound Policy” lecture to several hundred students and faculty at People’s University in Beijing, China.

Reed was a member of FEE’s Board of Trustees from 1994 to 2001, serving as chairman for three years.

The Mackinac Center will officially celebrate its 20th anniversary with a Nov. 11 gala at the Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center in East Lansing. Investigative reporter John Stossel of ABC's "20/20" news program will keynote the event.

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