2022 ISSUES TO WATCH

PRECISION AGRICULTURE | LEARNING PODS
RIGHT TO REPAIR | LOGISTICS INFRASTRUCTURE
ROAD USER FEES | CIVIL ASSET FORFEITURE
ELECTRIC VEHICLES | POWER GRID RELIABILITY
TAMPON TAX | OPIOIDS | HUMAN TRAFFICKING

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CSG SOUTH POLICY TEAM

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INTRODUCTION

As the 2022 legislative cycle approaches, lawmakers across the South are preparing and pre-filing legislation to address pressing policy issues in their states. With its regional focus, The Council of State Governments Southern Office (CSG South) is uniquely positioned to research and identify current and emerging policy issues and trends. This report, prepared by the CSG South policy team, previews issues and trends anticipated to emerge during the 2022 legislative term. State actions referenced in this report may represent appropriate policy options for Southern lawmakers to consider and may include bills or policies originating outside the CSG South region.

Current and emerging trends, which are relevant to policymakers across the South, have been identified under the purview of CSG South’s six standing committees. The Agriculture and Rural Development preview discusses precision agriculture and “right to repair” laws, while the Economic Development, Transportation, and Cultural Affairs preview examines issues related to logistics infrastructure, tribal sovereignty, and the federal Build Back Better plan. In Education policy, the equitable implementation of learning pods, models for hybrid co-teaching, and the use of datacasting to bridge digital divides are trends to watch for the 2022 legislative term, while infrastructure development for electric vehicles and strategies for improving the reliability of the power grid are important issues in the Energy and Environment arena. The Fiscal Affairs and Government Operations preview discusses alternative funding models for transportation infrastructure, efforts to repeal and reform civil asset forfeiture laws, and cryptocurrency regulation, while the Human Services and Public Safety preview examines tax exemptions for feminine hygiene products, the implications of ongoing opioid lawsuits, police reform, and legislative solutions to eradicate human trafficking.

Additional information about these or other issues that may be addressed in 2022 is available by contacting CSG South. Staff are available throughout the year to provide expert assistance on various policy issues important to state legislatures and, when needed, can leverage the organization’s resources to provide additional support for both legislators and staff.
Precision agriculture is a set of approaches that uses technology and data to maximize crop yields and help farmers make more informed decisions. GPS-guided tractors, pioneered by John Deere in the 1990s, were some of the first precision agriculture devices. These tractors have a GPS-connected controller that guides the tractor to specific coordinates. Computer-based applications are another tool that can help farmers to use pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers more effectively and efficiently. Other equipment utilized includes geographic information systems, drones, and real-time soil sensors. These tools have led to streamlined processes and greater crop yields but come with a learning curve and are cost prohibitive for many smaller farms. Since 2019, state legislatures have enacted at least 14 bills related to precision agriculture. This trend is expected to continue in 2022.

**TABLE 1. RECENTLY ENACTED PRECISION AGRICULTURE LEGISLATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>BILL</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VIRGINIA</td>
<td>Senate Bill 1163 (2021)</td>
<td>Establishes an individual and corporate tax credit up to $17,500 for the purchase of precision agriculture equipment. Equipment is certified by the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WASHINGTON</td>
<td>Senate Bill 5947 (2020)</td>
<td>Creates the Washington State Conservation Commission to develop a sustainable farms and fields grant program. Grants will be distributed to expand the use of precision agriculture in state-selected conservation districts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOUISIANA</td>
<td>Senate Concurrent Resolution 81 (2019)</td>
<td>Directs the Board of Regents to create a Postsecondary Education Agriculture Technology Study Commission to make recommendations regarding a potential Agriculture Technology Training Program.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Experts predict the world’s population may top 9 billion by 2050. According to the Harvard Business Review, **global food demand is expected to increase between 59 and 98 percent by the middle of the century**. New farming practices and techniques will be needed to meet this demand.

**FIGURE 1. PRECISION AGRICULTURE ENACTED LEGISLATION, 2019-2021**

![Map of enacted legislation](https://www.quorum.us/spreadsheet/external/CSyEhafuGgoyzIfhEcap/)

*Source: CSG South using data from Quorum (2021), https://www.quorum.us/spreadsheet/external/CSyEhafuGgoyzIfhEcap/*
The adoption of technology in agriculture has presented some challenges. Some of these new automated devices employ embedded software which prevents farmers from repairing their own equipment. In certain cases, farmers must wait days for authorized service personnel to perform costly repairs. Some farmers have purchased unauthorized software modifications and hacks, which may void a manufacturer’s warranty, to avoid the delays in service. In 2018, manufacturers promised to remove software blocks and allow easier access to equipment repair. Three years later, many farmers are still waiting on these changes.

In response, a “right to repair” movement has emerged, which argues against software and manufacturing processes that make it difficult or impossible for users to service their own equipment. In July, President Biden signed an executive order encouraging the Federal Trade Commission to issue rules making it easier for users and third-party companies to repair equipment and devices. As of this writing, the rules have not been issued.

In 2020 and 2021, Southern state legislatures considered at least 20 “right to repair” bills, with none passing. As 2022 sessions begin, farmers and others will continue to advocate for “right to repair” legislation in their states.

### TABLE 2. RECENTLY CONSIDERED “RIGHT TO REPAIR” LEGISLATION IN THE SOUTH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>BILL</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MISSOURI</td>
<td>House Bill 1118 (2021)</td>
<td>Referred to Agriculture Policy Committee.</td>
<td>Would establish that certain individuals and business have a right to repair information from certain manufacturers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARKANSAS</td>
<td>Senate Bill 461 (2021)</td>
<td>Recommended for interim study.</td>
<td>Would require manufacturers to provide repair information to farmers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KENTUCKY</td>
<td>Bill Request 342 (2020)</td>
<td>Pre-filed, not referred to committee.</td>
<td>Would require heavy equipment dealers to provide repair parts, tools, and diagnostic equipment to buyers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Since March of 2020, the COVID 19 pandemic has caused significant strain on the American logistics system. Many will recall the difficulties procuring toilet paper, hand sanitizer, and various cleaning products in the second quarter of 2020. As the holiday season approaches, Americans likely will continue to see strains on general consumer goods, a phenomenon that may extend well into 2022. As of this writing, the nation’s top ports (Port of New York and New Jersey, Port of Los Angeles, Port of Long Beach, and Port of Savannah) all are experiencing backlogs and bottlenecks. While some of this is due to port management practices (for example, a lack of 24/7 operating hours), many of the underlying issues can be traced to problems with the logistics system once cargo is off the water. For example, the nation currently is facing a severe shortage of truck drivers. To mitigate this, in Savannah, Georgia, an extra 80 acres is being developed to accommodate more container storage because containers cannot be moved quickly enough.

In the coming legislative session, states likely will pursue legislation aimed at equipping inland ports to receive cargo which would typically remain in coastal port holding areas, ensuring that ports have plans to operate on a 24/7 schedule to alleviate existing backlogs, and increasing incentives for new and returning truck drivers.
In the last year, several court rulings – including McGirt v. Oklahoma - have had broad impacts on tribal land in Oklahoma, as well as on non-Indigenous residents in the state. While these effects have been most profound in criminal cases, they easily could extend to broader issues, including state tax collections, what constitutes tribal lands, as well as additional tribal recognitions. These will be challenging issues for the federal, state, and tribal governments to navigate.

The 2020 census numbers show that the Native American population was the fastest-growing population in more counties than any other group in the United States. As negotiations in Oklahoma proceed, additional negotiations - or other court challenges - may emerge in other CSG South states with federally-recognized tribes and tribal lands.

As of this writing, Congress has passed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, but they have not yet passed the remainder of the president's Build Back Better Plan. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act has made it clear that investing in American infrastructure is a priority. What distinguishes the Build Back Better Plan from other federal infrastructure proposals is the inclusion of both traditional hard infrastructure (i.e., roads, bridges, water, resilience infrastructure, and telecommunications) as well as “human infrastructure,” which includes community college funding, funding for nursing education, childcare, and other areas of human services that are not typically considered “infrastructure.” Now that the first half of the plan (hard infrastructure) has passed, states will receive a combined total of $1.2 trillion to spend on traditional infrastructure.

Policymakers will have the opportunity to leverage this funding to reimagine parts of their current infrastructure, impacting current residents and future generations. To achieve lasting impact, states likely will invest in rural broadband, roads and bridges, as well as water and port infrastructure.
The disruption caused by the pandemic required many adaptations to existing education models in states – one of which was the concept of “learning pods.” These small group tutoring and teaching environments helped bridge the gap between in-person and remote learning for students. During the 2021 legislative session, only four states enacted legislation addressing these pandemic-inspired approaches to learning – three of which are in the South. Two of these states – Georgia and Texas – passed legislation focused on preemption by prohibiting local government restrictions on these learning groups and ensuring parental rights to enroll their children in such pods. Meanwhile, legislation enacted in Ohio included language which changed the statutory definition for blended learning to allow for learning pods in its omnibus education bill.

In Louisiana, lawmakers unanimously passed House Bill 421, which created a means for local education agencies (LEAs) to establish learning pods as an extension of existing schools. It also provided a method of continual funding by counting students enrolled in these groups for full funding under the state formula. Policymakers may resolve many concerns regarding lack of access and equity to these learning environments by creating a path to attach them to existing schools with a means for accessing public funding.

Educational experts agree that intensive, individualized, and small group tutoring provides the best means of correcting a “COVID slide.” Given this, policymakers may wish to consider allowing LEAs and other community groups the flexibility to create learning pods within existing funding frameworks.

**FIGURE 3. RECENTLY CONSIDERED “LEARNING POD” LEGISLATION, 2021**

*Source*: CSG South using data from Quorum (2021), https://www.quorum.us/spreadsheet/external/qtzWNNrYzSkjGGEMdHBM/.
TV ON THE RADIO: A POSSIBLE SOLUTION FOR BRIDGING EDUCATION’S “DIGITAL DIVIDE”

As leaders strive to correct the COVID 19 slide, gaps in student access to tutoring programs and internet resources pose serious challenges to distance learning - both outside of schooltime and during interims. According to the Federal Communications Commission, nearly a quarter of all families in the U.S. do not have access to high-speed broadband at home - leaving an estimated 15 to 16 million public school students without adequate home internet access. This “digital divide” necessitates alternative non-traditional means of providing supplemental and targeted educational resources to student populations in need. Enter: datacasting.

Datacasting works by creating a one-way transmission of protected data, such as academic resources, via radio waves that require only a wi-fi-enabled device and antenna instead of high-speed internet. South Carolina - the first state to pivot this technology from public television emergency communications to remote education - implemented a pilot program aimed at more than 30 school districts where the digital divide is present. As policymakers consider addressing learning loss during winter or summer breaks, as well as options for supplementing in-school learning, datacasting may provide a lower-cost means of transmitting educational resources and information to disconnected or underserved urban and rural student households.

FIGURE 4. SCHOOL DISTRICTS WITH POOR AND EXTREMELY POOR STUDENT ACCESS TO BROADBAND

Data Sources:
1. FCC 477 Broadband Data (Dec 2018)
5. IES NCES (2018-19)

HYBRID CO-TEACHING MODELS TO ADDRESS EDUCATOR SHORTAGES

Recent developments in e-learning technology and sizeable investments - at the state and federal levels - in internet access and infrastructure lend themselves to better integrating remote teaching in schools lacking qualified educators for in-demand subject areas. In 2021, Alabama enacted Senate Bill 190, which created a pilot program to utilize a remote, hybrid teaching model to fill educator voids in high-need subject area teaching vacancies. The Rural Schools Accelerator pairs in-person educators with distant subject matter experts - primarily in high-need fields - to provide instruction in rural and lower-income districts lacking qualified educators. In addition to filling critical gaps in rural schools, local education agencies tout this program as a means of addressing equity in areas, such as the Black Belt, where financial incentives alone have proven insufficient to fill openings.

Given the nationwide teacher shortage, and the demographic and geographic similarities among states in the South, similar hybrid paired teaching models may be a viable means of improving the quality of education while mitigating teacher shortages.
RUNNING OUT OF ROAD: USER FEES AS AN ALTERNATIVE OR SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING MODEL

Due to increasingly fuel-efficient and alternative-fueled vehicles, state governments continue to realize declining gasoline and motor fuel tax collections - directly impacting funding for deteriorating roadways. One solution is the adoption of a road user fee, or vehicle miles traveled (VMT) tax model, replacing or supplementing traditional fuel revenues.

To date, implementation of this model primarily is concentrated in a few Western states and bipartisan federal proposals.

In 2013, Oregon passed Senate Bill 810 to establish the first road use fee program in the nation. Subsequent legislation in 2017 and 2019 - House Bill 2017 and House Bill 2881, respectively - incentivized increased electric vehicle participation and laid a foundation for future statewide use of the program. Other states, including California, Colorado, and Washington, also enacted legislation to establish pilot programs to study the feasibility of VMTs and joined in a data-sharing partnership with Oregon. Most recently, California passed Senate Bill 339 during the 2021 session to extend its VMT pilot program through 2027.

In 2019, Utah joined Oregon in implementing a statewide program through the bipartisan passage of Senate Bill 72, aimed at developing a plan to enroll all motor vehicles by 2031. Utah Governor Spencer Cox noted the future expansion of the mileage fee program as a policy priority in his 2020 transition plan. In the South, Virginia enacted bipartisan legislation - Senate Bill 890 - to create an optional mileage-based user fee program in place of the bill’s highway use tax.

TAKEN: STATE EFFORTS TO REPEAL AND REFORM CIVIL ASSET FORFEITURE

Law enforcement seizure of property owned by individuals not charged with crimes, known as civil asset forfeiture, is the focus of renewed interest and public policy discussion. Critics of civil asset forfeiture assert that the practice can incentivize seizures as law enforcement agencies often keep all or a portion of the sale proceeds of any assets seized. While federal efforts are needed to stop such practices in certain instances, states can reform existing statutes to allow citizens to better protect and reclaim their property from government seizure - particularly in cases where no crime has been committed or alleged. Legislation reforming forfeiture laws has received broad bipartisan support in more than 30 states since 2014 - New Mexico, in 2015, was the first state to enact a complete repeal. During the 2021 legislative session, Maine became the first state to repeal civil asset seizures since 2015.

Nationally, only four states - including one Southern state, North Carolina - have repealed their civil forfeiture laws to require a conviction as a prerequisite for seizure. The North Carolina constitution requires seized assets to be allocated by the General Assembly to counties, on a per-pupil basis, toward maintaining public schools, eliminating a possible incentive for confiscation. However, local law enforcement may circumvent this law by participating in the federal asset seizure sharing program.

Additionally, many states in the U.S. do not retain data on the amounts or types of assets seized or regarding the custodial chain of the assets. Policymakers may wish to reform or repeal existing asset forfeiture laws and include more robust data transparency and collecting requirements to ensure law-abiding citizens are not victims of unnecessary government seizure with little to no recourse.
Recently, states across the country have established study committees and task forces charged with examining policies to address the shifting tides of technology - including the study of cryptocurrencies. In the South, Arkansas and Texas enacted legislation defining and better regulating cryptocurrencies, while Kentucky enacted legislation creating financial incentives to lure digital mining corporations to the state. For states that have yet to closely examine this issue, there is no time like the present to engage with and establish guidelines for this technological frontier, whether by drafting regulations or adopting incentives to attract this new manufacturing economy to their state.

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MAINE</td>
<td>Legislative Document 1521 (2021)</td>
<td>Specifies that law enforcement may only seize property if an individual is convicted of a crime involving said property.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEBRASKA</td>
<td>Legislative Bill 1106 (2016)</td>
<td>Abolishes civil asset forfeiture and requires a criminal conviction - involving illegal drugs, child pornography, or illegal firearms - for law enforcement to seize property.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW MEXICO</td>
<td>House Bill 560 (2015)</td>
<td>Creates strict requirements for forfeiture including a criminal conviction, knowledge that seized property was used illegally, depositing of forfeiture proceeds into general fund, and limits state and local participation in federal equitable sharing program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORTH CAROLINA</td>
<td>House Bill 829 (1985)</td>
<td>Restricts use of civil asset forfeiture to cases under the racketeering statute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORTH CAROLINA</td>
<td>Senate Bill 965 (2003)</td>
<td>Limits all civil forfeiture proceeds to be exclusively allocated to counties to fund public schools.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**GOING DIGITAL: STATE FINANCIAL REGULATIONS AND CRYPTOCURRENCY**

Recently, states across the country have established study committees and task forces charged with examining policies to address the shifting tides of technology - including the study of cryptocurrencies. In the South, Arkansas and Texas enacted legislation defining and better regulating cryptocurrencies, while Kentucky enacted legislation creating financial incentives to lure digital mining corporations to the state. For states that have yet to closely examine this issue, there is no time like the present to engage with and establish guidelines for this technological frontier, whether by drafting regulations or adopting incentives to attract this new manufacturing economy to their state.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3. ENACTED CIVIL ASSET FORFEITURE REPEAL LEGISLATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>STATE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>MAINE</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEBRASKA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW MEXICO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORTH CAROLINA</td>
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<tr>
<td>NORTH CAROLINA</td>
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**TABLE 4. RECENTLY ENACTED CRYPTOCURRENCY LEGISLATION**

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DELAWARE</td>
<td>Senate Bill 103 (2021) Related: Illinois Senate Bill 338 (2021) and North Dakota Senate Bill 2048 (2021).</td>
<td>Drafts a reporting requirement for virtual currencies, requires conversion to USD before remittance to state, and limits exposure of state and registered holders to claims by putative owners for volatile valuations. It also establishes a five-year timeline for considering digital currency abandoned property.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEBRASKA</td>
<td>Legislative Bill 649 (2021)</td>
<td>Establishes the “Nebraska Financial Innovation Act,” creating statutory guidelines for accepting and regulating digital currencies and licensing digital asset depository institutions and banks to trade virtual monies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEXAS</td>
<td>House Bill 4474 (2021)</td>
<td>The “Virtual Currency Act” creates a statutory definition for virtual currencies and includes a provision to establish control for shared digital assets - including allowing banks or other financial institutions to provide custodial services.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Major automobile manufacturers have set ambitious goals regarding the future of electric vehicles (EVs). By 2035, General Motors aims to only produce zero emissions vehicles. Meanwhile, Ford Motor Company says that by 2030, 40 percent of newly manufactured vehicles will be electric. If realized, this would be an enormous increase compared to current sales figures. According to Kelley Blue Book, Americans purchased approximately 300,000 EVs in the first three quarters of 2021. While a significant increase from previous years, EV sales only accounted for 2.6 percent of vehicle sales.

In 2020 and 2021, a dozen Southern states passed 52 bills related to electric vehicles. In 2022, Southern legislatures are expected to consider additional EV legislation on topics ranging from the availability of charging stations to tax incentives for EV manufacturers and owners.

TABLE 5. RECENTLY ENACTED ELECTRIC VEHICLE LEGISLATION IN THE SOUTH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VIRGINIA</td>
<td>House Bill 2001 (2021)</td>
<td>Requires any executive branch agency or institution or locality designing a new building larger than 5,000 square feet to have sufficient EV charging infrastructure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MISSOURI</td>
<td>Senate Bill 262 (2021)</td>
<td>Creates an Electric Vehicle Task Force to make recommendations regarding placement of charging stations, strategies for managing EVs’ impact on the power grid, and other related matters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUTH CAROLINA</td>
<td>Senate Bill 304 (2021)</td>
<td>Establishes the General Assembly’s Joint Committee on the Electrification of Transportation to study the challenges and opportunities associated with EVs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**POWER GRID RELIABILITY**

In February 2021, a massive weather system swept across the middle of the county, disrupting power to more than 5 million homes and businesses and causing an estimated $21 billion in damages. The storm, unofficially known as Winter Storm Uri, and the subsequent blackouts contributed to at least 200 deaths. Hurricane Ida, which hit the Gulf Coast in August 2021, caused blackouts for more than a million people and an estimated $27 to $40 billion in damages. These events are part of an alarming increase in the number of billion-dollar natural disasters. In 2020, the United States experienced 22 weather events that each caused at least $1 billion in damages, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. By comparison, the U.S. faced seven billion-dollar natural disasters in 2010 and 11 events in 2015.

In response, utility providers are pursuing strategies to make the power grid more reliable, such as using diverse energy sources, employing mini-grids or micro-grids, creating redundant transmission lines, and burying power lines underground—which can cost 10 times as much as overhead power lines. Each of these strategies come at a cost that ratepayers or governments will have to cover. In 2020 and 2021, Southern states enacted 34 bills related to the power grid. In the coming year, legislators will continue to work on this issue.

### TABLE 6. RECENTLY ENACTED POWER GRID LEGISLATION IN THE SOUTH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NORTH CAROLINA</td>
<td>House Bill 951 (2021)</td>
<td>Requires the Utilities Commission to develop a plan to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, modernize the state’s power grid, and implement new technologies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TECAS</td>
<td>Senate Bill 1281 (2021)</td>
<td>Requires the Energy Reliability Council of Texas to conduct a biennial assessment of the power grid’s reliability in extreme weather events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEST VIRGINA</td>
<td>Senate Bill 542 (2021)</td>
<td>Requires utility providers to provide advance notices of retirement, shutdown, or sale of electricity-generating units and requires coal-fired power plants to maintain at least 30 days of aggregate coal supply.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### FIGURE 7. POWER GRID ENACTED LEGISLATION BY STATE, 2020-2021

![Bar chart showing power grid enacted legislation by state, 2020-2021](chart.png)

TAMPON TAX
There has been growing support in recent years to provide sales tax exemptions for feminine hygiene products. States across the country have introduced bills to implement a sales tax exemption, or to address other areas of menstrual equity in education and corrections environments. At the time of this writing, only two states in the CSG South region have provided a sales tax exemption for these medical necessities: Florida and Louisiana.

In addition to seeking a sales tax exemption, advocates likely will continue to push for feminine hygiene products to be provided at no cost in schools and corrections facilities. States may see an additional push to ensure incarcerated women receive adequate supplies for each menstrual cycle.

FIGURE 8. MENSTRUAL EQUITY BILLS ENACTED, 2017-2021

OPIOIDS
The Purdue Pharma L.P. bankruptcy case is unique for a host of reasons. Now that a federal court has overturned the original settlement, the timeline and status of settlement funds for states and opioid treatments programs are uncertain. As the case continues to work its way through the court system, states will need to decide how to fund the necessary interventions to break the opioid crisis. Depending on the outcome of the appeals and any additional lawsuits, establishing an opioid trust fund - similar to the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement - may be necessary. Many uncertainties remain with other lawsuits against CVS Pharmacy Inc., Walgreen Co., Walmart Inc, and Johnson and Johnson and their associated verdicts. Meanwhile, countless patients continue to struggle with opioid use disorder and addiction.

As the case continues to work its way through the court system, states will need to decide how to fund the necessary interventions to break the opioid crisis.
HUMAN TRAFFICKING
State lawmakers continue to pursue legislative solutions to eradicate the trafficking of humans – for both forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation – and provide protection for victims. In doing so, states have pivoted from addressing the “supply” side of this complex issue – a practice that often resulted in the prosecution of victims – to addressing the demand for human trafficking. As states continue to grapple with this challenging issue, Florida Senate Bill 1826 of 2021 may serve as a model for other states.

The bill expands the definition of human trafficking to include “purchasing, patronizing,” or “procuring,”; provides for privileged communications between victims and their advocates; eliminates filing fees associated with the expungement of a victim’s criminal history; allows victims to pursue expungement in multiple jurisdictions simultaneously; and expands charges committed against minors to include victims believed to be under 18 years old.

POLICE REFORM
The summer of 2020 was marked by protests across the country spurred by the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, to name a few. Although these deaths occurred under vastly different circumstances, calls for police reform were ubiquitous. In the Southern region, Georgia significantly changed its citizens’ arrest law. In Kentucky, lawmakers enacted Senate Bill 4, which places restrictions on the use of “no-knock” warrants. While there are efforts at the federal level to provide incentives for reform, policing remains a fundamentally local process.

Each state will need to contend with its unique needs to address reform. The discussions likely will include pre-arrest diversion programs, embedding social workers within police departments, creating new units to focus on mental health and homelessness issues, de-escalation training, pay raises, and funding reduction prohibitions.
SAVE THE DATE
JULY 9-13, 2022
SOUTHERN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE
SLCO2022
OKLAHOMA CITY
Established in 1947, The Council of State Governments Southern Office (CSG South) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that exists to support members in all three branches of state government. At CSG South we act as an extension of state government, fostering the exchange of insights and ideas to help state officials shape public policy and create problem-solving partnerships.

The mission of CSG South is to promote and strengthen intergovernmental cooperation among its 15 member states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. Predominantly, this is achieved through the ongoing work of CSG South’s six standing committees and supporting groups. Legislative leadership, members, and staff depend on CSG South to identify and analyze solutions for the most prevalent and unique policy issues facing Southern state governments. We facilitate outreach in state capitols, leadership development, staff exchange programs, domestic and international policy delegations, and other efforts to support state policymakers and legislative staff in their work to build stronger, more successful states.

The Southern Legislative Conference (SLC) is the largest regional gathering of legislative members and staff. SLC boasts an array of well-established programs—focusing on both existing and emerging state government innovations and solutions—provide policymakers diverse opportunities to interact with policy experts and share their knowledge with colleagues.