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Governor Branstad Wraps Up Second Term as MGA Chair

Washington, D.C. –Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad ended his term as Chair of the Midwestern Governors Association (MGA) today, a role he has held since February 2012. Over the past year, Branstad has led the region in efforts to promote a positive Midwestern narrative, increase low-cost domestic energy production and celebrate the MGA’s 50th anniversary.

“It has been a tremendous honor to once again serve as Chair of the MGA, especially during the organization’s 50th anniversary. I truly believe that the Midwest is the best place to live, work, raise a family, grow a business and get a quality education. In addition, the region’s strengths in transportation, the biosciences, advanced manufacturing, energy production and many others provide us a solid foundation for future growth. The Midwestern spirit, work ethic and character is well-known and highly coveted. Through continued collaboration, we can build-upon our region’s strong legacy and cement opportunities for future growth and success,” said Branstad.

This past year the MGA brought together regional policy leaders from state government, non-governmental organizations, academia and the private sector at several events to accomplish Branstad’s agenda.

In September, Branstad hosted the MGA’s 50th anniversary meeting in Des Moines and spoke with a panel of other Midwestern governors, including Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton and Kansas Governor Sam Brownback. Joining the current governors were former Illinois Governor James Thompson and former Missouri Governor Bob Holden. The governors discussed the progress of the Midwest as well as steps the region can take to highlight its entrepreneurial opportunities. The meeting, *America’s Smartland – Deploying the Midwest’s Entrepreneurial Spirit*, celebrated the collective strengths of the region and addressed how the Midwest can better showcase itself to other regions and countries.

As part of its 50th anniversary celebration, the MGA also sponsored a video contest - *America’s Smartland: Let the Midwest Surprise You!* - to promote a positive Midwestern narrative and help the world learn about the strengths of the region. The video contest featured submissions by Midwesterners that tell the Midwest’s unique story. The goal of the video contest was to draw attention to all the Midwest has to offer – a strong work ethic and climate for business and job growth; high-quality schools and colleges; a stand-out standard of living, including vibrant cities and towns, affordable housing, cultural, recreational and sporting activities; four distinct seasons and breathtaking natural wonders. Four video finalists were announced in January, with the winner announced last week.

The MGA hosted a meeting in October in St. Paul that addressed the economic and transmission benefits of a low-cost and reliable electricity grid. This meeting provided a forum for cross-state discussions with governors' staff members, utility commissioners and transmission advocates. This year's meeting built upon the 2011 meeting held in Des Moines highlighting recent regional accomplishments, benefits of regional collaborative efforts, upcoming transmission challenges and how to fully leverage Midwestern energy opportunities and assets.

To further underscore the strengths and success of the region this year, the MGA:

- Released a series of brochures highlighting the strengths of the region in advanced manufacturing, the bioeconomy, low-cost energy and transportation; and
- Initiated a working group of industry and state leaders to work on strategies states could consider to increase Midwestern energy production and achieve low-cost energy for families and businesses. This work will continue through 2013.

Branstad, who also served as MGA Chair in 1987, will turn over the Chair's gavel to Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton at the MGA's Winter Meeting on February 24. For more information on the Gov. Branstad's agenda, visit www.midwesterngovernors.org/chairagenda2012.htm.

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The MGA is a nonprofit, bipartisan organization that brings together the governors of Midwestern states to work cooperatively on issues of importance to the region. Current members of the MGA are Gov. Pat Quinn (Ill.), Gov. Mike Pence (Ind.), Gov. Terry Branstad (Iowa), Gov. Sam Brownback (Kansas), Gov. Rick Snyder (Mich.), Gov. Mark Dayton (Minn.), Gov. Jay Nixon (Mo.), Gov. John Kasich (Ohio) and Gov. Scott Walker (Wis.).