

The History of Us

NCSL was founded in the conviction that legislative service is one of democracy's worthiest pursuits. In 25 years it has grown to be the preeminent organization dedicated to serving state lawmakers and staffs.

By Karl T. Kurtz

If NCSL didn't exist, we would have to invent it" is a phrase we hear often. So who did "invent" NCSL? How has it changed? What are the milestones in its 25-year history? How has NCSL become "the forum for America's ideas"?

In the early 1970s, there were three competing national organizations for state legislators. The National Legislative Conference was founded by a group of legislative service agency directors in 1948 to promote the coordination of research and exchange of ideas about legislative procedures, organization and services. Working as a wing of the Council of State Governments, NLC remained largely a staff organization until the mid-1950s, when legislators began to par-

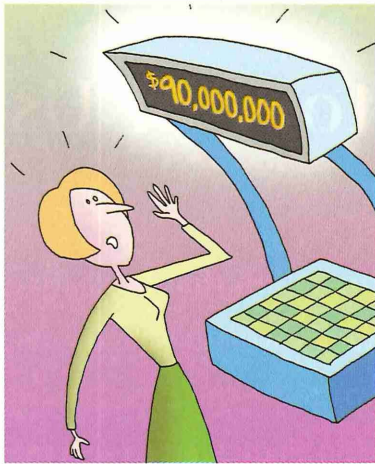
Karl T. Kurtz, NCSL's director of state services, worked for the National Legislative Conference before joining the NCSL staff in 1975.

ticipate and assume leadership roles.

Legislative leaders from some of the larger states formed the National Conference of State Legislative Leaders in 1959. They felt that the Council of State Governments was dominated by governors and the National Legislative Conference by staff. They wanted to focus on the role of legislative leaders and to create an organization to rival the National Governors' Association.

Rank and file legislators reacted to the formation of the leaders' conference by establishing the National Society of State Legislators in the early 1960s. The society was a relatively small organization, but had particularly effective relations with an association of private sector leaders who were committed to the improvement of state legislatures.

In 1970-71 the three organizations, with the help of the Citizens Conference on State Legislatures (a private, non-



RETAIL SCANNER LAW

Massachusetts became the first state to require annual inspection of retail scanners by either state or local authorities with the 1998 passage of the Consumer and Merchant Protection Act. The scanning devices, used at store checkout counters, need to be tested regularly to prevent consumer overcharges. The Massachusetts Weights and Measures Association estimates that more than \$90 million is wrongly charged each year in the state because of inaccurate prices and weights at checkout counters, particularly in grocery stores. The new law permits enforcement agents to issue tickets and impose fines when they find merchants in violation and provides for training and certification of inspectors. Although other states do require regular inspections, often they are contracted out to private firms, a key difference from the Massachusetts law.

PERFECTING PERFORMANCE (POSSIBLY)

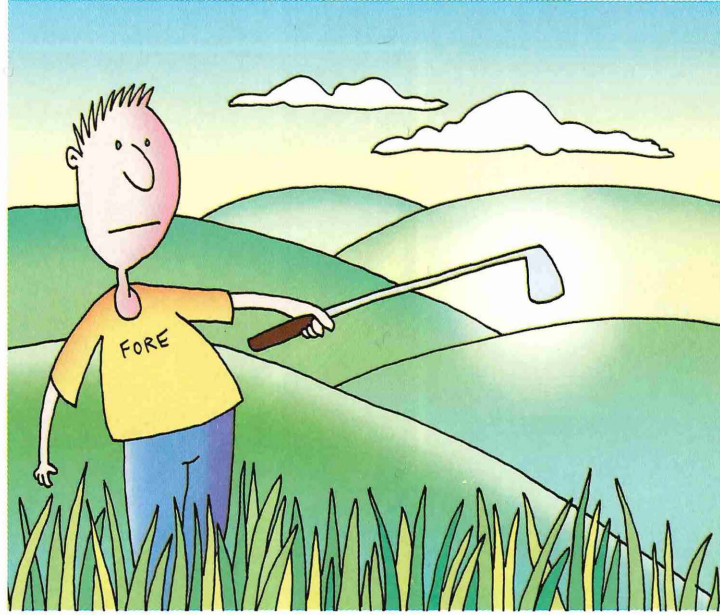
All states require children up to a certain age to go to school. A bill was introduced in the Louisiana House this session that would require public school parents to sign a contract guaranteeing not only that his or her child will attend school, but that the kid will arrive on time, try to do homework and follow school rules. HB 1990 says that it is up to the school district to define penalties. At press time, the bill was still in the House.

EVICTING GLICK

Over 135 years the National Statuary Hall Collection in the U.S. Capitol has seen its statues increase to 96, two each from all but four states. Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota and Wyoming are eligible for one more. Kansas wants to change theirs, replacing John James Ingalls and George Washington Glick with Dwight Eisenhower (from Abilene) and Amelia Earhart (from Atchison). Nope, says the curator, the law says each state can give two, and there's no provision for swaps. If Congress allowed it, would that mean constant revisionism, with statues rotating in and out? One of these days someone's going to complain that there are only six women among those 96 heroes. Kansas people have been working on the substitution of Eisenhower for Glick for about 18 years, so the question may not be resolved soon.

GREEN PARTY CANDIDATE UPSETS EX-MAYOR

A Green party candidate who had never run for office before got 50.55 percent of the votes in a March runoff for a California Assembly seat against a Democrat who was mayor of Oakland for eight years and before that had served 12 years in the Legislature. According to the Associated Press, Audie Elizabeth Bock was the first Green Party member in the nation to win state office, although a few have won city and county positions, here and there. Some observers thought that the upset could be credited (if that's the word) to the low turnout in the special election—only 15 percent of the registered voters in the 16th Assembly district.



GOLF COURSES GO GREEN

Illinois golf course managers are using the "natural look" for out-of-play areas. They've stopped mowing roughs and started using native plants in the grasslands and meadows they're creating. Eleven Chicago-area courses and 130 courses nationwide have become Audubon wildlife sanctuaries—home to white-tailed deer and over 100 species of birds. In South Carolina course managers are more concerned about the impact of course construction on tidal wetlands and how to avoid harmful discharge into tidal marshes. They are using "integrated pest management" to prevent toxic runoff, and making pesticide use a last resort.

STATE WIRETAPS UP

The Associated Press reports that the number of wiretaps authorized by state courts rose 24 percent last year, to 763 compared with 617 in 1997. Federally authorized wiretaps held steady. Buggings in New York made up almost half the state wiretaps, with 373. New Jersey was next with 84, then Pennsylvania (68), California (52) and Florida (44). Three-quarters of all wiretaps were aimed at catching narcotics offenders, 12 percent were aimed at racketeering and 7 percent at illegal gambling. Forty-two states, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands and the federal government have laws allowing courts to permit some form of bugging, and last year 25 states reported its use.

Merger talks revived in 1973-74 under the leadership of Connecticut Speaker William Ratchford, Ohio Speaker Charles Kurfess, Pennsylvania Speaker Herbert Fineman, Florida Representative George Firestone, Tennessee Representative Tom Jensen and staffers William Snodgrass of Tennessee and George McManus of Pennsylvania.

These leaders commissioned the Eagleton Institute of Politics under the direction of Alan Rosenthal to survey legislators and staff about the need for a single national organization and to make recommendations about the structure of a merged organization.

In August 1974 the National Legislative Conference and the National Society of State Legislators met in Albuquerque, along with the executive committee of the National Conference of State Legislative Leaders. The three entities voted to dissolve their organizations and form the National Conference of State Legislatures effective Jan. 1, 1975. Speaker Kurfess characterized the merger as "the most important step we can take to convince the nation of the strength and the quality of state legislatures."

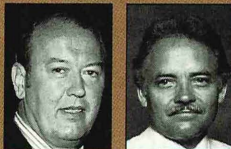
Crucial to the success of the merger was the support of the Council of State Governments, which granted \$500,000 to the new organization to support its first six months of operations until it could obtain its own funds from state appropriations. The Council of State Governments was the home of four regional organizations of state legislators, and this arrangement continued after the merger of the national organizations.

The structure of NCSL today is a direct result of the key issues and compromises in the merger negotiations of 1975. During the final stages, Maryland Senate President Pro Tem Steny Hoyer (now a member of Congress) argued effectively that the most fundamental powers of the organization should reside in the annual meeting—the largest and most democratic forum of the organization. As a

profit organization committed to legislative improvement), discussed a possible merger. These negotiations eventually bogged down, but did result in greater cooperation among the three organizations, especially in the area of federal representation in Washington, D.C.

1974-1975

President Staff Chair



Senate President
Kevin Harrington
Massachusetts

Eugene Farnum
Fiscal Agency
Director
Michigan

1975-1976

President Staff Chair



Representative
Tom Jensen
Tennessee

Bonnie Reese
Secretary Joint
Legislative Council
Wisconsin

1976-1977

President Staff Chair



Speaker
Martin Sabo
Minnesota

McDowell Lee
Secretary of the
Senate
Alabama

1977-1978

President Staff Chair



Senate President
Fred Anderson
Colorado

Robert Herman
Special Advisor
Speaker's Office
New York

1978-1979

President Staff Chair



Senate President
Jason Boe
Oregon

Arthur Palmer
Director of
Counsel Bureau
Nevada

SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW NCSL

1. Who was the first woman officer of NCSL?
2. Which annual meeting had the largest attendance (and the most media coverage)?
3. What city has hosted the annual meeting most frequently?
4. Who was the first African American officer of NCSL?
5. Presidents Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush and Clinton have all spoken numerous times at NCSL functions. However, only one has spoken in person at the annual meeting during his term in office. Who, where and when?
6. What state has had the most officers of NCSL?
7. What three state capitals were the finalists for selection as the NCSL headquarters?
8. What were the original names of the Assembly on Federal Issues and the Assembly on State Issues?
9. What are the voting rules for NCSL to take a policy position?
10. What major event in U.S. political history occurred one week before the 1974 annual meeting in Albuquerque at which the formation of NCSL was approved?
11. What former presidents of NCSL currently serve in Congress?
12. What are the names of the four people who have served as directors of NCSL's Washington office?

Answers to NCSL Trivia
 (1) Bonnie Reese, Wisconsin, staff chair, 1975-76. Missouri Representative Karen McCarthy, 1994, was the first woman legislator officer. (2) Orlando in 1991-8, 200. New Orleans, Philadelphia and Indianapolis, twice each. (4) Robert Smartt, New Jersey, staff chair, 1981-82. Arizona Representative Art Hamilton, 1992-93, was the first African American legislator officer. (5) Reagan in Atlanta in 1981. (6) Florida—four. Kansas, New York, Ohio and Wisconsin have had three each. (7) Denver, Indianapolis, Columbus. (8) Intergovernmental Relations Committee (later State Federal Assembly) and Assembly on the Legislature. (9) One vote per state, three-fourths majority required for passage. (10) Resignation of President Nixon. (11) Martin O. Sabo, Minnesota, and Karen McCarthy, Missouri. (12) Jerome Sohns, John Callahan, Robert Goss, Carl Tubbesing.

result, annual meeting participants must approve the NCSL budget, review its annual audit, elect its officers and executive committee, and adopt all policy positions. Initial NCSL annual meetings drew 2,000 to 2,500 participants. Attendance at the 1979 event in San Francisco jumped to over 4,000, and participation of 6,000 legislators, legislative staff, private sector and families has become routine in the 1990s.

Each of the original groups left legacies still present

in the structure of NCSL today. Legislative leaders were concerned that leaders play a key role in the new organization, so the bylaws specified that the president and at least 10 members of the executive committee be legislative leaders. NCSL regularly conducts seminars and produces publications specifically for leaders and maintains a Leaders' Center to respond to their needs.

The National Legislative Conference played a critical role in supporting the communication and professional development needs of legislative staff, and these services were continued and expanded under NCSL. Three of the seven NCSL officers are staff, and legislative staff are represented on the executive committee in a ratio of two legislators to one staff person. The original NCSL executive committee of 34 members has grown to 60, but the 2:1 legislator-staff ratio has remained constant. NCSL has 10 very active professional societies of legislative staff operating under its auspices.

As a carryover from the National Society of State Legislators, NCSL established a close working relationship with the State Government Affairs Council (SGAC), a national organization of private sector leaders who share NCSL's commitment to strengthening the legislative institution and the states' role in the federal system.

Today's Assembly on Federal Issues was an outgrowth of an intergovernmental relations committee of the National Legislative Conference and has been in place virtually in its present form since the first days of NCSL. AFI develops NCSL's policy positions on federal issues and lobbies Congress and the administration on behalf of the legislatures. The Assembly on State Issues was founded in 1978 as a state issues counterpart to AFI. ASI serves as a forum

1979-1980

President Staff Chair



Speaker
George Roberts
New Hampshire



David Johnston
Director Legislative
Service Commission
Ohio

1980-1981

President Staff Chair



Representative
Richard Hodes
Florida



Patrick Flahaven
Secretary of the
Senate
Minnesota

1981-1982

President Staff Chair



Senate President
Ross Doyen
Kansas



Robert Smartt
Assembly Deputy
Director
New Jersey

1982-1983

President Staff Chair



Senate President
Pro tem
Wm. Passannante
New York



Joe Brown
Secretary of the
Senate
Florida

1983-1984

President Staff Chair



Senate President
Miles "Cap" Ferry
Utah



John Lattimer
Director Intergovern-
mental Commission
Illinois

for the exchange of ideas on state issues and generally does not adopt policy positions.

NCSL established the Foundation for State Legislatures in 1982 as a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation that raises money to support the objectives and special projects of the conference. Its volunteer board of directors is composed of corporate and union executives, as well as state legislative leaders and senior legislative staff.

OFFICES AND STAFF



Earl S. Mackey

The first decision that confronted the executive committee of the new National Conference of State Legislatures was the selection of an executive director. Earl S. Mackey, one of two candidates from among the directors of the predecessor organizations, was chosen to run NCSL. Mackey had previously served in the Missouri House of Representatives, on the staff of the United States Senate and as an association executive.

After hiring an executive director, the executive committee conducted a national search to select a headquarters city. After considering Washington, D.C., the committee decided that a national organization of states should be located in a state rather than the federal capital. Denver was selected in a competition with nine other cities because of its good air transportation, attractiveness for recruiting staff and the presence of a number of other national and regional organizations of state officials. The Denver office has occupied space in four different downtown locations since 1975.

The NCSL leadership was committed to a strong office in Washington, D.C., to represent the interests of legislatures. NCSL's Washington offices were located with the National Governors' Association and the Council of State Governments, and NCSL was immediately recognized as

WHO WAS WHO

By the middle of 1975, a number of staff who continue to serve as leaders of NCSL today were working for the new organization. Karl Kurtz, current director of state services, and Dick Merritt, director of the Intergovernmental Health Policy Project, had worked for the National Legislative Conference and joined the staff of the new organization. Executive Director Bill Pound and Deputy Executive Director Carl Tubbesing came to work soon after the headquarters opened in Denver in 1975. Jerry Sohns, director of the NCSL Foundation for State Legislatures, was the first director of NCSL's Washington office. Other staff with more than 20 years of service with NCSL include Doug Sacarto, Diane Chaffin, Doug Webb and Larry Morandi in the Denver office and Joy Johnson Wilson and Kathy Brennan-Wiggins in the Washington office.

Many NCSL staff have gone on to other distinguished positions in and out of government. Among the more noteworthy are:

- ◆ Jim Edgar, NCSL's first director of state services, served as governor of Illinois from 1990-98. Before that he was an Illinois representative, on Governor Jim Thompson's staff and secretary of state.
- ◆ Two former NCSL staff members became directors of congressional budget committees. John Callahan was director of the Senate Budget Committee under Tennessee Senator James Sasser and now serves as assistant secretary for management at the Department of Health and Human Services. Rick May served as director of the House Budget Committee chaired by Ohio Representative John Kasich. May now lobbies in Washington, D.C., for Davidson and Associates.
- ◆ Former NCSL executive director Earl Mackey is vice chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents.

part of the Big Seven organizations of state and local government officials. In 1976 NCSL, CSG and NGA established the Hall of the States in Washington as a home for most of the major state government associations and individual state offices.

The new executive director was charged with hiring the rest of the staff. Several people who had worked for the National Legislative Conference came to work for NCSL. The staff numbered approximately 25 at the outset in 1975. A year later it had grown to 54. Today the staff includes 146 in Denver and 51 in Washington, D.C.



William T. Pound

Mackey served for 12 years as NCSL's executive director. William T. Pound succeeded him in 1987 and continues in that role today. Pound had worked for NCSL since early in 1975 and had previously taught political science at the University of Denver.

1984-1985

President Staff Chair



Deputy Speaker
John Bragg
Tennessee



Leo Mermott
Fiscal Analyst
Utah

1985-1986

President Staff Chair



Senate President
David Nething
North Dakota



Dale Cattnach
State Auditor
Wisconsin

1986-1987

President Staff Chair



Speaker
Irv Stolberg
Connecticut



John Andreason
Director Budget
Office
Idaho
(took over for Sue
Bauman, Kansas)

1987-1988

President Staff Chair



Senate President
Ted Strickland
Colorado



John Andreason
Director Budget Office
Idaho

1988-1989

President Staff Chair



Senate President
Pro Tem
Samuel Nunez
Louisiana



Betty King
Secretary of the
Senate
Texas

25 YEARS OF SERVICE TO YOU

For the past 25 years, we have been at your service: answering your questions, giving you the kind of research you need to do your job better, providing you with ideas for solving America's problems. You've turned to us and in all our work, you come first. Here's a snapshot of that work over the past quarter century.

- ◆ Number of state legislators we have served: 112,500
- ◆ Members of Congress we have lobbied: 7,400
- ◆ Presidential administrations we have lobbied: 4
- ◆ The number of times you've asked us for information, and we've answered: 304,124, plus hundreds of thousands more that you get answered from www.ncsl.org that we can't count
- ◆ The number of books, magazines and periodicals we've written and published: 1,708
- ◆ The number of meetings we've put on: 500
- ◆ The attendance at those meetings: 175,000
- ◆ The number of issues we've lobbied: 1,250
- ◆ The number of topics covered in the magazine: 5,000
- ◆ The number of issues researched by NCSL: 21,000
- ◆ The total of research grants won on behalf of the states: \$88 million
- ◆ The number of times we visited states to testify or support your work on issues: 900
- ◆ Number of NCSL staff who have provided these services: 868

As we enter a new century, just as we have for the past 25 years, we will be here to help you advance your ideas, bring you the latest ideas, promote the exchange of ideas and take America's ideas to Capitol Hill.

EXPANSION OF SERVICES

NCSL's flagship publication has always been *State Legislatures* magazine. However, the one-color newsletter style of the January 1975 issue bears little resemblance to NCSL's modern magazine. *State Legislatures* began accepting advertising in 1983 and moved to four-color printing in 1986.

From the outset, NCSL staff placed high priority on prompt, accurate, bipartisan responses to information requests. In the earliest days of the organization, a small group of NCSL generalists would meet every Monday morning to review all pending information requests and discuss how to answer them. Those days are long gone. Information requests now number several thousand per month, and the staff are issue specialists.

In order to facilitate the exchange of information among state legislatures and to reduce the number of questions asked of NCSL, a small group of legislative staff directors worked with NCSL in the late 1970s to develop an electronic information exchange of legislative research reports called LEGISNET. This was an important milestone in NCSL's growth and was a very early use of on-line information systems for exchange of policy information among the states. In 1994 NCSL began making LEGISNET available through an electronic bulletin board system that soon evolved into a presence on the World Wide Web. Today, over half a million legislative policy documents are accessible to legislators and legislative staff via NCSLnet, NCSL's Web site (www.ncsl.org).

NCSL made some fundamental budget decisions in 1975 to emphasize services in two areas: the management and organization of the legislative institution and state fiscal policy. These early decisions about the allocation of resources are still present in the NCSL budget today. NCSL emphasizes the legislative institution because it is unique in this field, and improving the quality and effectiveness of

1989-1990

President Staff Chair



House Minority Leader
Lee Daniels
Illinois

Patrick O'Donnell
Clerk of Legislature
Nebraska

1990-1991

President Staff Chair



Speaker
John Martin
Maine

William Russell
Chief Counsel
Vermont

1991-1992

President Staff Chair



Senate President
Paul "Bud" Burke
Kansas

Terry Anderson
Legislative
Research Director
South Dakota

1992-1993

President Staff Chair

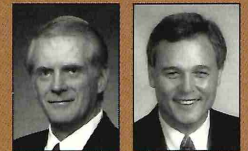


House Minority Leader
Art Hamilton
Arizona

Don Schneider
Clerk of the Senate
Wisconsin

1993-1994

President Staff Chair



Senate Minority Whip
Robert Connor
Delaware

John Turcotte
PEER Committee
Director
Mississippi

legislatures is one of its fundamental goals. State fiscal policy has been a focus because the power of the purse is the most fundamental legislative power, and NCSL believes it should be expert in this field.

NCSL was actively involved in providing training and professional development for legislative staff from the outset. The development of training and technical assistance programs for legislators was facilitated by a grant from the federal government under the Intergovernmental Personnel Act beginning in 1976.

This grant, called Project TRAIN, provided resources to allow NCSL to tailor training programs to the needs of individual states and deliver services directly in state capitals. After Project TRAIN funding ran out, NCSL continued to provide specially tailored individual state assistance programs.

Today, NCSL delivers more than 100 programs in three-quarters of the states every year. In the 1990s it has moved into the international arena to assist emerging democracies in strengthening their legislatures and federal systems.

The National Legislative Conference brought a few federal and foundation grants to NCSL in education finance and science and technology. The energy crisis of the late 1970s caused the federal government to urge states to invest more in alternative energy sources and led to a great expansion of NCSL grant activity in the areas of energy, natural resources and the environment. NCSL's growing reputation in these policy areas helped to obtain grants in human services, health care and criminal justice.

In the early 1980s the first Reagan administration substantially reduced federal grants to state and local government, and this led to the first significant cut-backs in NCSL funds and staffing. It also caused NCSL

to expand marketing of its products and services, including advertising in the magazine and sale of publications and exhibits at the annual meeting in order to diversify funding sources.

After the first Reagan administration, grants and contracts gradually expanded again. In the early 1990s grants made up 42 percent of NCSL's funding and allowed staff to specialize in specific policy areas in ways that would not be possible without them. Almost all of these grants were in the Denver office.

In 1996 the Intergovernmental Health Policy Project and the Health Policy Tracking Service, formerly housed at George Washington University, agreed to transfer operations to NCSL in its Washington office. This greatly expanded both NCSL services in health care policy and the size and mission of the Washington office.

NCSL's core funding comes from the appropriations that state legislatures make to support the organization. This means that there is an annual test of the value of this invention: whether or not the 50 states provide the necessary operating funds. In NCSL's first fiscal year, 1975-76, 46 states appropriated funds to support the new organization. Within one year, 49 states were participating, and by 1977-78 all 50 states were members. Since that time, state, territorial and commonwealth legislatures have confirmed the value of NCSL every year by appropriating more than 95 percent of the funds requested of them.

Working in partnership with the state legislatures, NCSL has matured into a vital organization. As legislatures have taken on more and more responsibilities, NCSL has grown in its ability to support their work. Together NCSL and the state legislatures have become the forum for America's ideas.

1994-1995

President



Representative
Karen McCarthy
Missouri
(elected to
Congress mid-term)

President



House Assistant
Minority Leader
Jane Campbell
Ohio

Staff Chair



Ted Ferris
Joint Budget Com-
mittee Director
Arizona

1995-1996

President



Deputy Majority
Whip
James Lack
New York

Staff Chair



Alfred Speer
Clerk of the
House
Louisiana

1996-1997

President



House Majority
Chairman
Michael Box
Alabama

Staff Chair



Russell Larson
Controller General
Delaware

1997-1998

President



Senate President
Richard Finan
Ohio

Staff Chair



Anne Walker
Clerk of the
House
Missouri

1998-1999

President

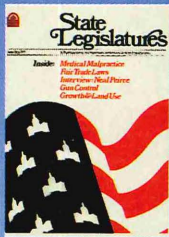


Representative
Daniel Blue, Jr.
North Carolina

Staff Chair



Thomas Tedcastle
General Counsel
Director Bill Drafting
Florida



25 Years of Hot Topics Covered in State Legislatures

The '70s

Recession
 Aerosol spray bans
 Medical malpractice
 Fair trade laws
 National health insurance
 Nuclear safety
 Revenue sharing
 Gun control
 Sentencing reform
 Generic drugs
 Alternative energy
 Inflation
 Unemployment
 Shrinking surpluses
 School violence
 Welfare reform
 Bans on pay toilets
 Rising health costs
 State workers strike
 Presidential primaries
 Nuclear waste disposal
 55 Speed limits
 Workfare
 Mandatory retirement
 Shortage of rural doctors
 Abortion
 Adoption records
 Illegal aliens
 Block grants
 Child pornography
 Product liability
 Unemployment insurance
 Turn-on-right
 Nursing home reform
 Missing children
 Privacy
 Crowded prisons
 Arts education
 Electronic banking
 School finance reform
 Energy conservation
 Hospital costs
 Property tax relief
 Aiding the elderly
 Domestic abuse
 Food tax
 Legalized gambling
 Family farms
 No-fault insurance
 Drug war
 Computers
 Item pricing
 Bottle laws
 Obscenity
 Illiteracy
 No-fault divorce
 Crime victims
 Offshore drilling
 Zero-based budgeting
 Tax increases
 Land use planning
 Flextime
 Drinking age
 Medicaid costs
 Blue laws
 Living wills
 Helmet laws
 Line-item veto
 % for art laws
 Federalism
 Urban sprawl
 Growth management
 State pension debt
 Legislative oversight
 Juvenile crime
 Right-to-life
 Higher education
 Capital punishment
 Solar energy
 Civil service reform
 States and tribes
 Living with Prop. 13
 Gray power
 Tuition tax credits
 Federal deficit
 Productivity
 Federal preemption

Women's rights
 Child support
 Economic development
 Helping small businesses
 Financing elections
 Gas crisis
 Vehicle emissions
 Health care reform
 Computer technology
 International trade
 State aid for heat bills
 Pornography
 Reapportionment
 Tax revolt

The '80s

Spending limits
 Federal preemption
 Education finance
 Health care reform
 Public transit
 Higher ed reform
 Equal opportunity
 Sagebrush Rebellion
 Arson
 Union wages
 Indian water rights
 Reagan federalism
 Fiscal forecasts
 Gambling
 Medicaid
 Revenue turnbacks
 Women leaders
 Federal block grants
 Enterprise zones
 Clean air standards
 Conservation
 Troubled families
 Nursing homes
 Alternative sentencing
 Water management
 Block grants
 Adoption
 Ballot initiatives
 Recession
 Right-to-die
 Runaways
 Capitol renovation
 Regulatory reform
 Decaying infrastructure
 Drunk driving
 Economic development
 Acid rain
 Energy efficiency
 Renewable energy
 Family policy
 Tax increases
 Handgun control
 Interstate banking
 Legislative reform
 New federalism
 Pensions
 Preserving farmland
 Highway dollars
 Insanity defense
 Reapportionment
 Federal mandates
 Funding the arts
 Taxes
 Taxing oil
 Unemployment benefits
 International trade
 Reorganizing agencies
 Antitrust lawsuits
 Women lawmakers
 Media relations
 Job training

Then and Now

For 25 years NCSL has served the states. Some things have changed, others haven't.

By Julie Lays

In some ways it was a different world in 1975 when NCSL was founded. America was in a terrible recession. Unemployment reached an average national high of 9.2 percent. Six million Americans were drawing unemployment compensation. Spending for social services reached an all-time high. Five of the 10 largest bankruptcies in U.S. history occurred. Transportation, railroads, airlines, truckers and banking were in bad shape.

Educational systems were plagued by inflation, teacher strikes and resistance to desegregation. Mortgage rates rarely dipped under 9 percent. The median income of American families was \$12,840. Twenty-two states established new taxes or raised existing ones.

With OPEC controlling much of the world's oil, gas prices rising and air pollution a concern, Americans were buying small cars: popular were the Ford Pinto, Chevy Chevette, AMC Pacer and Plymouth Volare.

A federal campaign, Whip Inflation Now (WIN), was catching the public's attention.

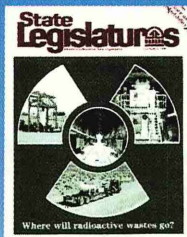
And IBM came out with a new 50-pound computer that sold for less than \$9,000, as compared with the previous low of \$35,000.

But in some ways the world was all too familiar. Americans were debating many of the same issues in 1975 as we are today, with a slightly different twist.

- ◆ What to do about a rise in crime in the nation's schools.
 - ◆ Whether to further control the spread of guns, especially "Saturday night specials."
 - ◆ How to protect the environment and ozone from strip mining and fluorocarbon propellant aerosols.
 - ◆ How to better track down deadbeat parents.
 - ◆ What to do about prison overcrowding and rioting, especially in the South.
 - ◆ How to reform social services, particularly food stamps.
 - ◆ How to stop the rise in bombings, arson and suburban crimes.
 - ◆ How to eradicate the leading causes of death: heart disease and cancer.
 - ◆ How involved to get in the conflicts around the world (Vietnam was still fresh on our minds): There was fighting in Eritrea, Israel, Cambodia, Northern Ireland, Lebanon, Rhodesia, Cyprus; coups in Ecuador, Honduras, Peru, Bangladesh, Chad; independence declared in Mozambique, Papua New Guinea, Angola.
- Although many of the issues remain the same,

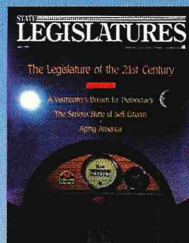
Julie Lays is an assistant editor for State Legislatures.

- User taxes
- Volunteerism
- Fiscal gloom
- Hazardous waste
- Workers right to know
- Branch banking
- Custody laws
- Workfare
- Farm debt
- State-local relations
- Habitual criminals
- Education and business



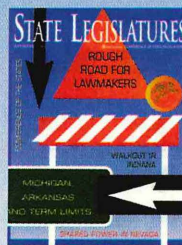
- Unemployment
- Affordable housing
- State forecasts
- High tech economic development
- Social Security reform
- Long-term health care
- Revenue sharing
- Teacher competency
- Corporate donations
- Helping small businesses
- Prison industries

- Campaign finance
- Telecommunications
- Federal deficit
- Community corrections
- State-federal relations
- PACs
- Initiatives and referenda
- Conflict management
- Student loans
- Computer crime
- Women's wages
- Legislative staff
- Legislative veto
- Tax revolt



- Helping the elderly
- Child support
- Private prisons
- Organ donations
- State lotteries
- Mental health care
- State pension funds
- Helping the homeless
- Hazardous waste disposal
- Water pollution
- Child abuse

- Victim compensation
- Sports franchises
- Tourism
- Houses for the handicapped
- Indoor air pollution
- Immigration
- Leaking storage tanks
- Preschool programs
- Computerized bill drafting
- Privacy at work
- Cable TV
- Indigent health care
- Gerrymanders
- Regulating utilities
- State taxes
- Low-level waste
- Youth suicide
- Campaign finance reform
- Water rights
- Public art
- Crowded prisons
- Teen pregnancy
- Legislative consensus
- Tax incentives
- Dropouts
- Citizen legislators
- Liability litigation
- Surrogate motherhood



- Animal rights
- Trading with Canada
- Super collider
- Drug tests
- Juvenile crime
- High flex work force
- Japanese schools

- Legislative pay
- Agency watchdogs
- Privatization
- Long-distance learning
- Superfund
- Economic competitiveness
- Seatbelts in buses
- Wellness programs
- Therapist liability
- State budget problems
- AIDS
- Corporate takeovers
- Auto insurance
- Legislative ethics
- Worker training
- Radon
- Product liability
- Rural education
- Demographic shifts
- Paying for education
- Helping the uninsured
- Biotechnology
- Line-item veto
- Mail-order taxes
- Incumbents
- Lobbyists
- Minority set-aside
- Federal mandates
- Impact fees
- Tax abatements
- Taxing food
- Landfills
- Electronic information
- Highway sanctions

The '90s

- State revenues fall
- Voter turnout
- EPA mandates
- Term limits
- Workers' comp
- Recession hits
- Global warming
- Right-to-die
- 'Green' products
- Taxing tourists
- Self-esteem
- Private prisons
- Family leave
- Branch banking
- Job training
- Economic development
- Earmarking
- Property taxes
- Drug addicted moms
- Japan's "employment" insurance

- Historic preservation
- Vote by mail
- Campaign finance
- Child labor
- Computerized legislatures
- TB comes back
- Indian gambling
- Domestic violence
- State finances rosy
- Babies in prison
- Entrepreneurship
- Helping the homeless
- Government reform
- Community service
- Wind power
- Immigration
- Performance-based budgeting
- Special education
- Fiscal reform
- Bingo scams
- Clean Air Act
- Gangs
- Recycling
- Sexual harassment
- Initiatives and referenda
- World Wide Web
- Genetic engineering
- Environmental justice
- Preemption
- Sentencing reform
- Base closings
- Handicapped housing
- State sovereignty
- Electric vehicles
- Devolution
- Gun control
- Women legislators
- Conference of the States
- Curtailing bureaucracy
- Takings
- Vehicle emissions
- Balanced federal budget
- Alternative schools
- Early voting
- Emergency preparedness
- Teacher training
- Videoconferencing
- Lead poisoning
- Managed care
- Block grants
- Welfare reform
- School repairs
- Electricity restructuring
- Project Citizen
- Y2K
- Road rage
- Air pollution
- Patient privacy
- ISTEA
- Cloning
- Gambling on line
- State rights
- Mail order wine
- Hazardous waste
- Drunk driving
- Juvenile crime
- Capitol renovations
- Tax rebates
- Funding stadiums
- Charter schools
- Wildlife management
- Caring for the elderly
- The Internet
- Child care
- Tax rebates
- Tickets by camera
- Bilingual education
- Sexual predators
- Child support
- Crowded prisons
- Financing education
- TEA-21
- Tax cuts
- Redistricting
- Electric utilities
- Brownfields
- Identity theft
- Tobacco settlement
- Adolescent health care
- Press coverage
- Rationing health care
- Growth management
- State-federal relations
- Duty to assist laws
- Background checks
- Federal mandates
- Rural hospitals
- Reviving downtowns

state legislatures were different places in 1975. Democrats had a majority in both houses of 37 state legislatures; today that number is down to 20. (Republicans have 17, and 12 are split.) There were 5,100 Democratic state lawmakers and 2,385 Republicans. Today there are 3,881 Democrats and 3,471 Republicans.

Twenty-five years ago, 2.7 percent of lawmakers said their main occupation was full-time legislator, today 15 percent are full-time. Legislators were making different salaries in 1975, too. In California the salary was \$21,120, today it is \$99,000. In Nebraska it was \$4,800, now it is \$12,000. That sounds good. But the trouble is that those 1999 dollars buy a smaller basket of goods than the 1975 dollars in both states. In New Hampshire they don't worry about those things, though. Their salaries were \$100 then and are \$100 now.

There were 604 female lawmakers (8 percent) in 1975 compared with 1,652 or 22.3 percent today. The average legislator represented 28,549 people in 1975; today the average is 36,682 (but now there is help with fax machines, e-mail systems and cell phones not available 25 years ago).

And there were fewer than 27,000 staffers in 1975 compared with more than 36,000 today.

The post-Watergate era had begun, and Gerald Ford was president (even though both Squeaky Fromme and Sara Jane Moore had tried to end that). It was the International Women's Year. More than 1,300 delegates from 133 countries attended the UN World Conference of the International Women's Year in Mexico City.

Medical malpractice insurance was soaring, there was talk of national health insurance, and no one had heard of AIDS.

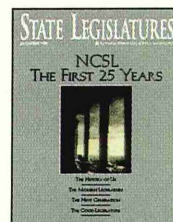
James Hoffa disappeared. U.S. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas retired. Patricia Hearst was captured after being kidnapped 19 months before. And Chiang Kai-Shek died.

There were no executions in 1975 due to the 1972 high court ruling that capital punishment was unconstitutional; last year there were 68 executions and there have been 30 so far this year. Women comprised only 19 percent of the arrests for serious crimes. (Today they make up 25 percent of the total.)

Violence in the entertainment industry had not reached the height it has today. Popular TV shows were "All in the Family," "The Waltons," "M*A*S*H," "Maude," "Sanford and Son" and "The Six Million Dollar Man." The "Star Trek" craze was continuing. "Jaws" and "The Godfather, Part II" were hit movies. John Denver and Elton John were pop stars.

And Sports stars were still sports stars (but with much smaller salaries). Jack Niklaus dominated golf; Pelé, soccer; and Muhammad Ali, boxing. The Pittsburgh Steelers defeated the Dallas Cowboys in Super Bowl X. The Cincinnati Reds beat the Boston Red Sox in the World Series. And the Golden State Warriors defeated the Washington Bullets for the NBA championship.

America 25 years ago was the same as it is today—yet different. It needed state legislatures to tackle the problems facing it, just as it does today. The more things change...



Staff Section Stories: A History

Staff, an important part of any legislature, are also an important part of NCSL.

By Jeanne Mejeur

Legislative staff have been an essential part of the establishment, growth and direction of NCSL. Many legislative staff worked with the National Legislative Conference and supported the merger of that organization with the National Conference of State Legislative Leaders and the National Society of State Legislators into what is now NCSL. Legislative staff played a key role in the merger negotiations in the early years of NCSL to ensure that the new organization would serve as a source of support and professional development for staff. They fought for participation with legislators on the NCSL Executive Committee and the ability to govern their own affairs.

Early on, legislative staff saw the importance of working with their counterparts. Legislative staff before the 1960s were primarily generalists, performing many different tasks. And most of them who were active in the National Legislative Conference valued meeting with all types of staffers. But as staffing in legislatures grew more specialized, so did the staff organizations.

The staff groups, called "sections," developed out of the need to share information and learn from colleagues in other states. Although NCSL provides an umbrella of support for the staff sections, it has also greatly benefited from their leadership, participation and support.

Four of the staff sections predate the founding of NCSL, growing out of the National Legislative Conference. Their histories parallel the growth of NCSL.

American Society of Legislative Clerks and Secretaries (ASLCS) 1943

The American Society of Legislative Clerks and Secretaries was

NCSL's Jeanne Mejeur works with the Research and Committee Staff Section. Other NCSL staff section liaisons also contributed to this article.

established in 1943, making it the oldest of NCSL's 10 staff sections. Joseph A. Beek, secretary of the California Senate, and T. Thomas Thatcher, clerk of the Michigan House, were the founding members of the society, which began with 107 members. Beek served as president for 25 years, beginning in 1943.

ASLCS has a number of milestones in its history. The society presented its first seminar in 1967 in Albany, N.Y., with 16 members in attendance. Its newsletter, *The Legislative Administrator*, was first published in 1969. Bylaws and membership dues were adopted in 1972.

ASLCS published the first edition of its code of ethics in 1973 and had a logo designed in 1975. In 1993, ASLCS celebrated its 50th anniversary.

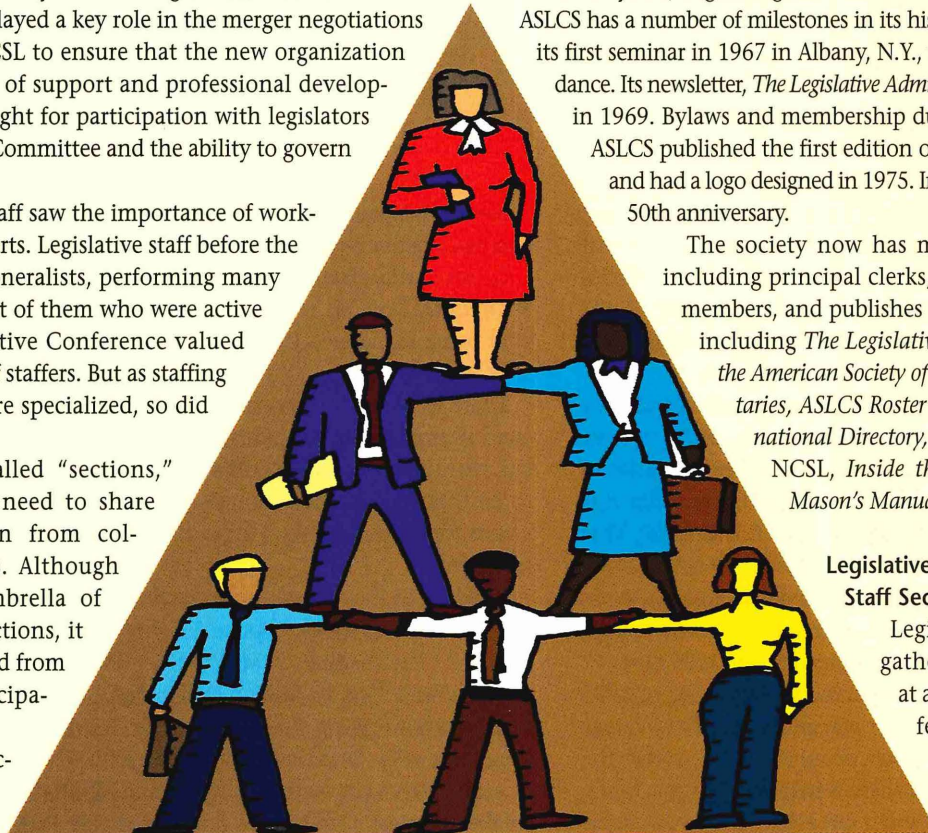
The society now has more than 350 members, including principal clerks, secretaries and associate members, and publishes a number of publications, including *The Legislative Administrator*, *Journal of the American Society of Legislative Clerks and Secretaries*, *ASLCS Roster and Reference Guide*, *International Directory*, and, in cooperation with NCSL, *Inside the Legislative Process* and *Mason's Manual*.

Legislative Research Librarians Staff Section (LRL) 1972

Legislative librarians began gathering informally in 1968 at a National Legislative Conference (NLC) meeting in St. Louis, Mo., and published their first directory in 1971.

The group formally organized as the Legislative Reference Library Services Section at the 1972 meeting of NLC in New Orleans, and elected Maine librarian Edith Hary as chair. Several current LRL members were among the charter members of the staff section, including West Virginia's Mary Del Cont, Louisiana's Suzanne Hughes and Irene Stone of California.

LRL published its first newsletter in 1977, adopted bylaws in 1978, printed its first directory in booklet format in 1980 and presented its



first professional development seminar in 1989 in Denver with 22 librarians in attendance.

The support the legislative librarians provided to NCSL was invaluable in designing and maintaining LEGISNET, the first on-line searchable database of legislative research reports, program evaluations and articles. LRL currently publishes the *LRL Newslines* and an annual *Staff Contacts Directory*. The staff section also publishes *Core Reference Collection for Legislative Libraries*, *Survey of Automation in Legislative Libraries*, and *Legislative Intent Research: A 50-State Guide*.

National Legislative Services and Security Association (NLSSA) 1973

A group of legislative staff working together in 1973 with the National Legislative Conference to produce a manual on legislative security established the National Legislative Services and Security Association. The group discovered common needs for training in security measures and the benefits of sharing information.

NLSSA was founded in 1973, and elected Tony Beard Sr., chief sergeant at arms for the California Assembly, as the first president. Following in his father's footsteps, Tony Beard Jr. now serves as the chief sergeant at arms for the California Senate and was NLSSA president from 1987 to 1989.

The staff section established specific membership qualifications and is one of only two NCSL staff sections to charge dues. The group held its first training conference in 1974 in Sacramento, Calif., drawing 100 members from 33 states.

NLSSA continues to provide an annual training conference and publishes a quarterly newsletter and an annual directory of its members. In cooperation with NCSL, NLSSA also produces *Services and Security Inside the Legislature*, a comprehensive survey on state legislative security, and *Protocol: A Handbook for Legislative Staff*, which offers information on proper protocol and etiquette in handling important guests, state funerals, flags and legislative ceremonies. The group celebrated its 25th anniversary in 1998.

STAFF SECTION TRIVIA:

- ◆ ASLCS is the oldest staff section, founded in 1943.
- ◆ LINCS is the newest staff section, established in 1999.
- ◆ Leadership was the first staff section formed after the founding of NCSL.
- ◆ NLSSA is the smallest staff section, with 215 members.
- ◆ RACSS is the largest staff section, with 1,700 members.
- ◆ Four staff sections—ASLCS, LRL, NLSSA and NLPES—are older than NCSL.
- ◆ Joseph A. Beek is the longest serving staff section officer, having served as the president of ASLCS for 25 years beginning in 1943.
- ◆ The oldest newsletter is *The Legislative Administrator*, first published by ASLCS in 1969.
- ◆ Alan Rosenthal was a speaker at the first professional development seminar sponsored by the Leadership Staff Section.
- ◆ ASLCS had 16 members at its first professional development seminar in 1967.
- ◆ LRL members served as an integral part of LEGISNET, NCSL's online data base.
- ◆ NLSSA members have written a book on legislative protocol and etiquette, *Protocol: A Handbook for Legislative Staff*.
- ◆ Only two staff sections charge dues: ASLCS and NLSSA.
- ◆ LSSS is the only national legal professional organization representing legislative legal staff.
- ◆ Leadership is the only staff section to have its professional development seminar disrupted by the eruption of a volcano—Mt. Spurr—at its meeting in Anchorage, Alaska, in 1992.
- ◆ ASLCS is the only staff section to hold a meeting while under tsunami warnings, at its professional development seminar in Monterey, Calif., in 1994.
- ◆ NALIT is the most recent staff section to begin holding an annual professional development seminar.
- ◆ Four staff sections—LSSS, NALFO, NLPES and RACSS—jointly sponsor NCSL's annual Skills Development Seminar.
- ◆ In 1993, ASLCS celebrated its 50th anniversary.
- ◆ In 1997, LRL celebrated its 25th anniversary.
- ◆ In 1998, NLSSA celebrated its 25th anniversary.
- ◆ The newest staff section, LINCS, will hold its first formal meeting at the NCSL Annual Meeting in Indianapolis this summer.

National Legislative Program Evaluation Society (NLPES) 1974

The National Legislative Program Evaluation Society traces its beginnings to the early 1970s, when many states began forming legislative units to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of government programs.

In 1974, legislative staff from Illinois, Connecticut, New York, North Carolina, Minnesota, Mississippi, South Carolina, Massachusetts, Montana and Virginia established the

Legislative Program Evaluation Section, in affiliation with the Government Research Association.

The group produced a newsletter, published a report on the status of program evaluation in the states, and met at the Government Research Association's annual meetings.

NLPES joined the National Conference of State Legislatures as one of the original staff sections when NCSL was formed in 1975. Gerald Silliphant of New Jersey was elected as the first chair. And two of the chairs from the staff section's early years continue to be involved today: Florida's John Turcotte, who served as NLPES chair in 1978, and Virginia's Philip Leone, who chaired the staff section in 1981.

In the late 1970s, NLPES worked with the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University to create a national clearinghouse of legislative program evaluation reports. The staff section held its first formal professional training seminar in 1987, hosted by the Minnesota legislative auditor's office. Before that members met informally and held training sessions for several years with the General Accounting Office in Washington, D.C.

Now with more than 1,000 members, NLPES offers an annual training conference and continues to publish a newsletter, the *NLPES News*. It also has a listserv and an impressive Internet site that includes research links and a nationwide database of published legislative program evaluation reports.

Leadership Staff Section (LSS) 1975

The Leadership Staff Section was the first to be organized after the establishment of NCSL. Sue Bauman of Kansas, Patricia Briggs of New York and Tim Campbell of Illinois were instrumental in founding the Leadership Staff Section, having realized the value of sharing information with other staff who worked for legislative leaders. Having laid the groundwork in 1975, staff section status was granted to "Leadership" at the NCSL Annual Meeting in Kansas City, Mo., in 1976.

It was a busy year for Leadership. The staff section adopted bylaws and elected its first executive committee, chaired by Robert Smartt of New Jersey and Maria Garcia of Colorado as vice chair. The group also held its first professional development seminar in 1976 in St. Paul, Minn., with Alan Rosenthal

as a featured speaker on a program that included panels on leadership staff roles, management techniques, and legislative staff organization and development.

In 1981, Leadership began publishing a newsletter, *From the Office of the Leader*, which evolved into *Leadership Staff Notes* in 1987. In addition to the newsletter, LSS presents an annual training conference for its members.

National Association of Legislative Fiscal Officers (NALFO) 1977

NALFO was created by members of the Eastern Fiscal Officers Association, the Western States Legislative Fiscal Officers Association, the Mid-Western States Legislative Fiscal Officers Association, and the Fiscal Affairs and Government Operations Committee of the Southern Legislative Conference, who saw the need for a national organization representing legislative fiscal staff.

Discussion about establishing NALFO began in 1976 at the NCSL Annual Meeting in Kansas City, Mo. The group formally adopted bylaws at the 1977 NCSL Annual Meeting in Detroit.

NALFO elected Maralyn Budke of New Mexico as chair, Al Roberts of New York as vice chair and Gerry Rankin of Iowa as secretary for 1977, and held its first training seminar that year. NALFO members contribute to *The Fiscal Link*, an on-line newsletter, and publish an annual NALFO directory, NALFO *Fiscal Office Salary* survey, *State Budget Actions* report and *State Tax Actions* report.

The group was one of the first staff sections to use a listserv as a means of sharing information among members. In 1998, NALFO completed a staff training video developed for use in orienting new staff to the work of a legislative fiscal analyst.

National Association of Legislative Information Technology (NALIT) 1978

NALIT had its roots in the Legislative Information Needs Committee that served as a forum on technology for legislators, staff and vendors in the mid-1970s, and the Legislative Information System Task Force, which was established by NCSL and included legislative staff from Connecticut, Illinois, Iowa, Ohio, Oregon, Washington and Wisconsin who had an interest in technology issues.

At the 1977 NCSL Annual Meeting, legislative computer staff laid the foundation for what would become the Computer Applications Staff Section. It was formally recognized



GIVE US YOUR OPINION

NCSL wants your advice.

Please take a few moments at the Annual Meeting to make some suggestions and give us your opinions at the official "Feedback Station" in the Indiana Convention Center.

What: Opinion survey on NCSL services and meetings.

When: Monday, July 26 through Wednesday, July 28, 8 am to 5:30 pm.

Where: Foyer area outside exhibit halls A and B at the Indiana Convention Center.

VOICE POLL
communications

in 1978. Founding members included Washington's Ed Miller and Illinois' Walt Kesselman, who were among the few professional information technology staff back then.

From fledgling technology issues in word processing and document reproduction, legislatures began considering computer networks, chamber automation, fiscal analysis systems, databases and bill drafting software.

Reflecting the enormous importance of technology in support of the legislatures, the staff section became the National Association of Legislative Information Technology in 1992. From a handful of staff, NALIT has grown to more than 400 members and boasts an interactive Web site, on-line directory and listserv; publishes the *NALIT Newsletter*; and presents an annual professional development seminar.

Research and Committee Staff Section (RACSS) 1979

The impetus for what is now RACSS came from legislative council and agency directors, including Bonnie Reese of Wisconsin, Serge Garrison of Iowa, Dave Johnston of Ohio, Lyle Kyle of Colorado and Carl Frantz of Connecticut, who had been meeting informally at NCSL's meetings. RACSS was formally established in 1979, as the Research and Substantive Committee Staff Section.

Bylaws were adopted in 1979 and the staff section began presenting programs at NCSL meetings.

Originally established for research and service agency managers, by 1987 staff section officers, including Allan Green of Connecticut and Joyce Honaker of Kentucky, agreed that they should include nonmanagement staff as well. As a result, RACSS began a concentrated effort to reach out to all legislative staff who are involved in research or policy analysis, and in 1988, changed its name to the Research and Committee Staff Section.

Also in 1988, the staff section published the first *RACSS Newsletter*, and in 1991 added its annual *Directory of Key Research Contacts*. In 1994, RACSS began presenting an annual seminar for senior professional development.

At more than 1,700 members, RACSS is the largest of NCSL's staff sections, and one of the most diverse, with both partisan and nonpartisan research staff, committee staff, legislative attorneys, caucus staff and individual member staff.

Legal Services Staff Section (LSSS) 1982

As the NCSL staff sections became more specialized, legislative attorneys felt the need to have a forum of their own.

Established in 1982 at the NCSL Annual Meeting in Chicago, Ill., Legal Services started with a core group of legislative attorneys who had worked closely with NCSL, including Becky Lennahan and Douglas Brown, both of Colorado, William Russell of Vermont, James Clodfelter of Tennessee and Dennis Cooper of Washington. A long-time staff section member, Bruce Feustel who was with the Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau and chair of Legal Services for 1993-94, is now a senior fellow in NCSL's Legislative Management program.

Legal Services is still the only national legal professional organization dedicated to legislative attorneys and paralegal staff. In 1987, Legal Services began publishing its newsletter, *The Legislative Lawyer*, and has since added an annual directory, *Legal Services Key Contacts*.

Legal Services has long sponsored the senior bill drafting seminar and recently joined in the professional development seminars of NLPES and RACSS, as a co-sponsor. Legal Services supports a listserv for communication among legislative legal staff and maintains an active Web site. Legal Services also provides extensive support to bill drafting staff in emerging democracies.

Legislative Information and Communications Staff Section (LINCS) 1999

The genesis for NCSL's newest staff section began in 1997 at the Public Information and Media Relations seminar in Washington, D.C., when four legislative staff articulated the same ambition: to enhance and expand the resources available to legislative communications professionals.

Susan Swords and Penny Silletti from the New Jersey Office of Legislative Services, and Sheila McCant and Brenda Hodge from the Louisiana House and Senate joined forces to explore the creation of a staff section for legislative public information staff.

Although NCSL had sponsored biannual training seminars for communications staff for a number of years, staff agreed there was a need for ongoing support and formal information exchange on a continuous basis.

The initiative took greater shape in late spring 1998, when letters were received from 26 states in support of the idea. A staff sec-

THE STAFF NETWORKS

The Legislative Education Staff Network provides a forum for legislative staff with responsibility for education policy and finance issues. Cosponsored by NCSL and the Education Commission of the States (ECS), activities include a newsletter, an on-line discussion group, a directory of legislative education staff and regular seminars on education issues.

The Legislative Health Policy Staff Network promotes the exchange of information and ideas for legislators and legislative staff interested in health policy. The network sponsors an on-line discussion group and meets in conjunction with NCSL's Annual Meeting.

tion mission statement and bylaws were drafted and presented at the 1998 NCSL Annual Meeting in Las Vegas. In January 1999, the NCSL Executive Committee granted full approval to the new staff section at its meeting in Louisiana.

LINCS is developing its home page on the NCSL Web site and will continue to use its newsletter, *The Informant*, as a primary means of communication. The LINCS executive committee will hold its first formal meeting at the NCSL Annual Meeting in Indianapolis with the Public Information and Media Relations seminar to follow in the fall.

LOOKING AHEAD

As the staff sections continue to expand the programs and services they provide for their members, they also continue to help shape the future of NCSL. Each of the 10 staff sections has two representatives on the Legislative Staff Coordinating Committee (LSCC), which serves as the guiding entity for legislative staff activities and services at NCSL. Through its committees and task forces, the LSCC has developed products such as the *Model Code of Conduct for Legislative Staff* and the *Model Policy for Appropriate Use of The Internet*, and promoted professional development opportunities. Many staff section members have gone on to serve on NCSL's Executive Committee and several have been elected as NCSL staff chair, the highest legislative staff position within NCSL.



The Modern Legislature

State legislatures have changed dramatically over the last 25 years and will continue to do so in the new century ahead, adapting and evolving to meet our country's shifting needs.

By William T. Pound

Each one is unique, yet they are all strikingly similar. Each has diverse responsibilities, yet they all share common problems. State legislatures—"the first branch of government"—are the most revitalized and changed government institutions in America, and today they have a vastly increased capacity to govern.

Yet they find themselves challenged as seldom before. Public esteem and perceptions of the legislature, as well as of many other institutions, fell steeply early in this decade. Although positive support for legislatures has improved recently in tandem with the strong U.S. economy, the public remains skeptical of public officials. Term limits and other restrictions on the legislative branch have spread in recent years, in contrast with the preceding quarter century when legislative power was generally strengthened and constitutional restrictions on legislatures were relaxed. The earlier changes were intended to strengthen legislatures and make them more professional institutions. Recent changes, however, are intended to roll back these efforts.

William T. Pound is NCSL's executive director.

The impact of term limits and of several recent constraints on the authority of some legislatures to raise taxes or spend money will probably not be fully felt for some years. Six states—California, Colorado, Maine, Michigan, Missouri and Oregon—have directly felt the effects of term limits. Loss of experienced members, rapid turnover among leadership and increased numbers of bill introductions are all in evidence, as are legislators' changing relationships with staffs and lobbyists.

In those states that allow it, the initiative process is being used to bypass or restrict the legislature. Not only has the number of initiatives increased, but they also are creating momentum on issues in states without them. Term limits, gambling and marijuana use for medical purposes all gained public attention as initiatives, but were soon being pushed as policy issues in legislatures throughout the country.

Electronic and print media coverage of legislatures has also changed. Television coverage has declined, as has newspaper coverage of the legislature in some states. The press is likely today to be more critical in its coverage and to apply ever higher standards to ethical issues.



A WIDE VARIETY STILL EXISTS

Since the 1970s, state legislatures could be categorized into three groups.

- ◆ The first are those that are “professionalized,” a group that includes highly urbanized states with large populations, such as California, New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin and New Jersey. These legislatures tend to have higher compensation, unlimited time in session, large professional staffs and members who define their occupation as legislator.
- ◆ The second category comprises about half the states and is best described as transitional, having some characteristics of both the highly professionalized legislatures and the more traditional citizen legislatures.
- ◆ The states in the third category (about 15) are termed traditional legislatures. They are generally limited in session length, have lower legislator compensation and small central staffs. These states also have higher turnover rates, and members who do not see legislative service as a career. These legislatures are found primarily in New England and the less populous agricultural states of the Midwest and West.
- ◆ The 1990s brought about what may become a fourth category of legislature—those with term limits. Eighteen states throughout the country now have limits on the time members can serve. As term limits become more widely implemented, the differences between the legislatures with term limits and those without will be significant.

Technological changes and the new challenges of the global economy also confront legislatures as never before. Issues that were once matters of mostly local concern now must be dealt with at the state level. At the same time, Congress, the administration and international agreements are bypassing some traditional areas of state authority. State regulatory authority and revenue systems will face dramatic challenge and change in the early 21st century.

A TRANSFORMED INSTITUTION

It is easy to lose sight of how the modern state legislature has evolved and become strong. Interested citizens, legislative staff, lobbyists and even lawmakers themselves may take the resources and capabilities that have fostered this change for granted, but state legislatures in 1999 have progressed more than any other government institution over the past 35 years. In the 1950s a national

study referred to state legislatures as “19th century institutions.” But by the early 1980s futurist John Naisbitt called state and local governments “the most important political entities in America.” And events of the last decade have only enhanced their role. Legislatures have been transformed in a number of ways to make them equal partners in state government.

The reapportionment revolution of the mid-1960s was the catalyst for the modernization of state legislatures. State and federal courts handed down the one-person, one-vote rule, requiring legislative districts to be drawn with equal population. But the impetus for change had already begun as early as the 1930s as legislatures added staff and started doing their own budget analyses. In these earlier years, limits were removed on session lengths, salaries and the matters legislatures could consider. In 1941 only four legislatures held annual sessions. That number grew to 19 by 1962, to 35

in 1972 and to 43 today. Only Arkansas, Kentucky, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon and Texas still have biennial sessions.

SESSION LENGTH: A REVERSAL IN ATTITUDE

During the 1960s and 1970s limits on legislative sessions were eliminated or relaxed. This was an important step in strengthening legislatures by giving them more time to act on issues. Some of these changes continued into recent decades. For example, Utah lengthened its sessions by 10 days per biennium in 1984 when it changed from a 60-day first year and 20-day second year system to 45 days per session. New Hampshire went to annual sessions in 1985. However, in the '80s and '90s we saw somewhat of a change as legislatures reacted to public pressure concerning the time spent in session. They tried to be more efficient and looked for ways to reduce the length of sessions.

Alaska adopted a 120-day limit in 1984, replacing its previously unlimited sessions. Colorado imposed a limit of 120 days in 1988, and Nevada did so in 1998. Washington set limits when it went from biennial to annual sessions in 1981. Oklahoma in effect limited sessions in 1989 by specifying that the Legislature could meet only from February through May. Louisiana in 1995 shortened and limited the scope of its sessions. Movements to adopt more restrictive session limits surface periodically, particularly in the states with the longest sessions.

Other results of the reduction in constitutional restrictions and the changing operating environment of state legislatures are seen in the ability of 31 legislatures to call themselves into special session. In the past 15 years, they've done so more frequently. Twelve state legislatures may extend their sessions, giving them more flexibility in getting work done.

Some states without constitutionally limited sessions now recess subject to the call of the leadership rather than to adjourn sine die. This allows the legislature to act at any time and react immediately to changing situations rather than handing over interim authority entirely to the executive branch.

Several of the medium-sized states actually spend as many days in session as do the full-time legislatures. More than two-thirds of the legislatures were in session more than 100 legislative days each biennium during the 1980s and '90s. And full-time legislators are more

likely to spend considerable time in district offices and place a high priority on service to constituents.

OCCUPATION: 'LEGISLATOR'

William Schneider, a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute who studies politics and public opinion, says that "professionalism makes it more difficult for institutions to solve policy problems."

"The very things that a career legislator must do to stay elected make it more difficult for the collective body—the legislature—to solve problems," Schneider says. "The problem, very simply, is that to most voters, professionalism and politics don't mix.

"In fact, most Americans see them as antithetical," he says. "The very notion of a professional politician strikes voters as an oxymoron."

Yet it is clear that the public wants and needs constituent services and that legislators are taking on this time-consuming role.

More legislators than ever define their occupation as "legislator." Although the vast majority of lawmakers combine legislative service with another vocation, the percentage of legislators serving full time increased dramatically from 3 percent in 1976 to 11 percent in 1986 to 14 percent in 1995. In 12 states it was the most common profession members listed. In New York and Pennsylvania more than three-quarters of the lawmakers describe their occupation as "legislator," according to an NCSL study.

Lawyer legislators exist in greatest numbers in the South, but their numbers have dropped since the '70s. Business owners and farmers have also seen their representation in legislatures decrease. Both occupations require a great deal of time, which can conflict with the "ombudsman" style of service demanded by constituents. Women and minority representation continues to increase each biennium. There are now more than 1,600 women (22.3 percent—the highest ever) and more than 800 minority members among the country's 7,424 state legislators. Women and minority legislators are starting to move into leadership positions.

PAY MADE A DIFFERENCE

Adequate pay for legislators was an important element in legislative modernization. Constitutional restrictions on legislators' salaries were removed, and

today only six states set legislator salaries in their constitutions. The others do so by statute, often with some type of compensation commission to make binding or advisory recommendations. States with salary limits tend to provide the lowest levels of legislator pay.

Current salaries range from \$100 per year in New Hampshire to \$99,000 in California. And in many states, legislative leaders and committee chairs receive additional pay. However, when adjusted for inflation, legislator salaries have remained fairly flat over the past two decades.

STRONGER COMMITTEES

Other contributions to the modernization of state legislatures include stronger committee systems and procedures and a greater emphasis on interim committee activities. Committee strength varies from state to state, but in most legislatures committees have greater substantive expertise than in past years and are more influential in shaping legislation. Most states have cut back on the number of committees. In many legislative bodies today, most bills are killed in committee, not on the floor.

Money committees have become increasingly powerful as legislatures have taken on more budget authority. There has also been an increase in the tension between money committees and the other standing committees in legislatures.

Legislatures have also become more active during the interim period between sessions. The effectiveness of interim committees varies widely. A growing trend is to use standing committees during the interim. In states with strong interim or legislative council traditions, interim committee bills often have a high rate of passage. Even when no direct legislation results from interim work, the interim may have a substantial educational effect on subsequent legislative action.

Legislatures also override gubernatorial vetoes with greater frequency than in past years. In part this is due to veto sessions that provide the legislature greater opportunity to consider the governor's action on bills. But in a number of states, it is primarily due to increased independence in the legislative branch and split partisan control of the branches of government. A rise in legislature-executive conflict is attributable to greater legislative resistance to vetoes and the more aggressive role of the modern legislature in budget policy.

These changes have been accompanied by continual expansion of legislative capacity through staffing, facilities and information resources.

Legislative councils (first established in Kansas in 1933) allow legislatures to function during interim periods and give them some permanent research and legal capability independent of the executive branch or outside resources. Likewise, specialized fiscal staffs allow legislatures to develop their own budget analysis, independent of the governor's office.

The permanent staff of state legislatures totals about 28,000 employees, with another 8,000 as temporary or session staff. Nearly all the growth in staff has occurred since 1969 with the development of specialized staff in areas such as fiscal, legal services, auditing and program evaluation, administrative rule review, media relations, computer services, and committee staff. In recent years the growth in legislative staff has leveled off, with most of it occurring in caucus staff and staff for individual legislators.

Legislative facilities have been improved in nearly every state. At the beginning of legislative reform, few states provided more to legislators than a desk on the floor. Committee rooms were nonexistent or inadequate. Legislatures have gradually moved other governmental offices out of Capitol buildings, increasing the space available to the legislature and providing offices for legislators as well as modern committee and staff facilities.

AND NOW, THE COMPUTER

In like manner, the information technology available to legislatures has expanded steadily. Increased staff resources have meant greater independent information and support for state legislatures. In the 1950s most legislatures were primarily dependent on the executive for information and support services.

Today, computers and the Internet are transforming the legislative process. Pennsylvania pioneered the idea of having a separate computer staff for the legislature in 1967. Now, every state has an in-house computer staff, ranging from two or three information "techies" in smaller states to hundreds in some of the larger, full-time legislatures.

In the 1980s many legislatures were using bill drafting, bill status and statute retrieval systems that operated on mainframe computers. There were less than a

handful of companies that supplied computerized bill drafting and statute retrieval programs, and most states relied on those vendors to develop and maintain the systems. Today legislatures have far more options. Many use commercial, off-the-shelf software that in-house staff or consultants have customized for them. Many legislatures have moved off mainframe computers. Personal computers can be found everywhere in Capitol buildings, including legislative chambers and committee rooms. Relatively few legislative staff had computers in the 1980s; now most use PCs daily. Even fewer legislators had computers until recently. Now lawmakers in more than half the states use a computer in the chamber, and many have laptops that go with them to committee rooms, district offices and home.

In just the past few years, the Internet has brought about a significant change in citizen access to and involvement in the legislature. Most legislators have e-mail addresses, and many correspond directly with constituents via e-mail. Citizens no longer have to travel to the Capitol for copies of bills and bill status reports. Every state now provides bills or bill status on legislative Web sites, and, in 49 states, statutes are available on the Internet. In at least six states, citizens can get free automatic updates via the Internet for specific bills they want to follow. At least 17 states have live audio or video coverage of sessions so the public can tune in via computer. Legislatures are also exploring other innovative ways of interacting with citizens online. Utah set up weekly "on-line chats" between citizens and committee members, and a Virginia joint committee recently posted bill drafts on the Web for citizen comment.

NEW THINGS TO DO

Over the past quarter century legislatures have undertaken many new functions. They became more aggressive in the oversight of executive branch programs. Some have created mechanisms for the review or veto of administrative rules. Many have established program evaluation units. Constituent services, district offices and public information efforts have been developed by a number of legislatures, particularly in the larger states.

The environment in which legislatures function is changing as the relationships and

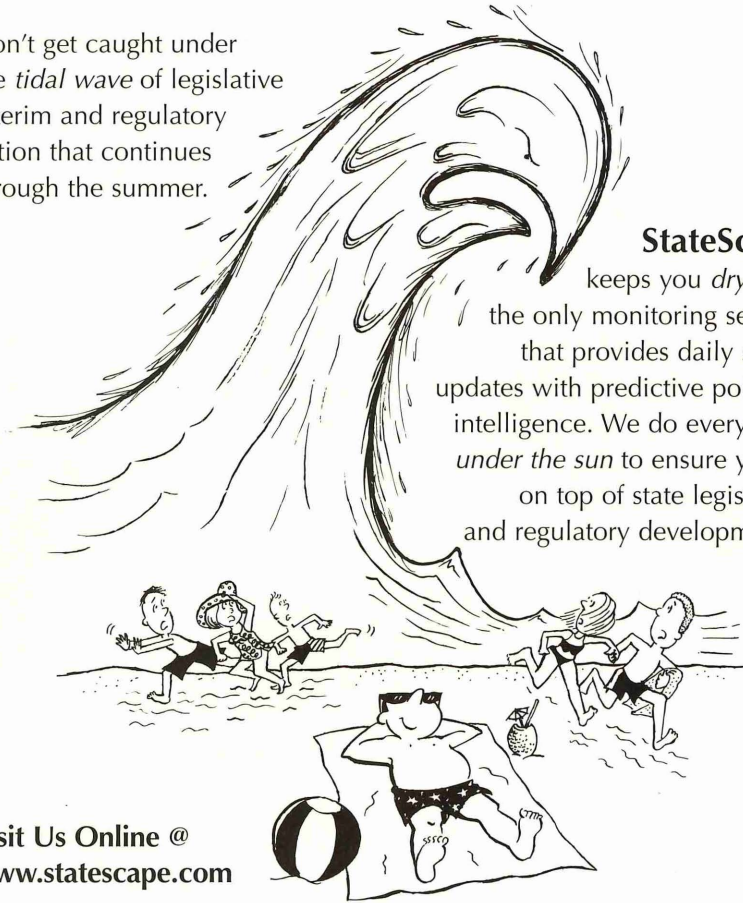
responsibilities of various governmental levels change. With the responsibility for most domestic programs becoming centered in the states, lobbying pressures are increasing and the cost of election campaigns is rapidly rising. The number of registered lobbyists in many states has more than doubled in the past 10 years. And the costs of state legislative election campaigns have risen to hundreds of thousands of dollars in the larger states, with proportionate increases in the smaller states.

The role of the state legislator has not nec-

essarily become easier, despite the increased resources. Programmatic, budget and constituent demands will continue to grow. Legislators and staff today, as the men and women who served before them, bear a responsibility as guardians of the legislative process and institutions. Term limits, public skepticism and a negative press have put increased pressure on the institution. The challenge of the next 25 years for state lawmakers is to make representative government work in an ever-changing environment and renew public confidence in representative institutions. ■

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