



Biographies

Legislator Participants



Representative Robert Behning has served in the Indiana State Legislature since 1992 and represents House District 91. He was born and raised in Indianapolis, Indiana and has been a proud Hoosier his entire life. In 1976, he received a Bachelor of Science degree from Indiana University. He was a small business owner for 30 years and is an active member of his church and community.

Representative Behning, through his civic service, has received many prestigious awards. In 1999, he received the Indiana Chamber of Commerce Government Leader of the year award. In 2011, he received a Golden Apple Award for his outstanding work in educational reform legislation in addition to the 2011 Indiana

Non-Public Education Association Legislative Leadership Award.

Through years of experience, knowledge and passion, Behning fundamentally strengthened Indiana's K-12 education system and put tools in place that will equip Indiana students with a high quality education to prepare them for success. E-mail – h91@in.gov



Representative Linda Belcher a long time teacher and school administrator before retiring, was first elected to the Kentucky House of Representatives' 49th District in 2008. Due to her education background Representative Belcher played a leading role as a freshman legislator in enacting Kentucky's biggest reform of its elementary and secondary school system in nearly 20 years. Representative Belcher has worked as an elementary school teacher, assistant principal at a middle school and principal at an elementary school. Additionally, she served as Bullitt County Public Schools' Director of Transportation.

Representative Belcher is an active member of the Little Flock Baptist Church. She has served on several other boards, including ones for Bullitt County Democrats, the Bullitt County Center for Women and Families, and Jewish Hospital South. Her other civic work includes being members of the Lions Club, the Bullitt County Women's Club, the Bullitt County Retired Teachers Association, and the county's Red Cross Shelter Committee. She is a lifetime member of the VFW Post Auxiliary 5710. Representative Belcher has two children and three grandchildren.

E-mail – linda.belcher@lrc.ky.gov



Assemblywoman Susan Bonilla was elected in November 2010 and represents California's 11th Assembly District, which is primarily comprised of the northern portion of Contra Costa County. Bonilla previously served on the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors, representing the County's 4th District. Previously to being elected to the Board, in 2006, she served on the Concord City Council and as Mayor. While on the Concord City Council, she initiated the Literacy Coalition, a network of literacy providers dedicated to raising the awareness of literacy needs and mobilizing volunteers to meet those needs.

Prior to serving as a public official, Bonilla worked as a high school English teacher in the Mt. Diablo Unified School District. In the Assembly, Bonilla is focused on improving our educational system, fostering economic development and job creation, improving access to health care, and rebuilding California's transportation system. Bonilla earned her B.A. in English from Azusa Pacific University and teaching credential from CSU Los Angeles. Assemblywoman Bonilla and her husband reside in Concord, have four daughters, and two grandchildren. E-mail – susan.bonilla@asm.ca.gov



Representative Mia Butler Garrick was elected to the South Carolina House of Representatives in 2010 and serves on the Medical, Military & Municipal Affairs (3M) Committee. She was also appointed by the Speaker of the House to serve on the Joint Citizens & Legislative Committee on Children.

She attended South Carolina public schools along the infamous "Corridor of Shame." During college, she served as a page for Representative David Beasley, who later became Governor. After college, she worked for the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce before enrolling at the University of South Carolina School of Law, where she later earned her Juris Doctor degree. In 2002, Butler Garrick left state government to start McLeod Butler Communications, LLC, a public affairs consulting firm. As a community leader Garrick has been recognized as one of South Carolina's "Top 20 Under 40". In 2010, she earned the distinction of becoming a Liberty Fellow. Representative Butler Garrick proudly represents District 79 and resides in Columbia, South Carolina with her husband and sons.

E-mail – mgarrick@mcleodbutler.com



Senator Beth Bye was elected to represent the citizens of the 5th Senate District town of West Hartford, Bloomfield, Burlington and Farmington in Connecticut. In the state Senate, Bye is Co-Chairman of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee and is a member of the Education, Judiciary and Internship committees. Senator Bye was first elected to the state legislature in 2006 to represent the 19th Assembly District.

Senator Bye was named "Legislator of the Year" in 2009 by the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance and in 2001 Bye was named one of Connecticut Magazine's "30 Young People of Influence" and in 2000 she was awarded "Outstanding Service Award" by The Connecticut Association for the Education of Young Children.

She earned her B.A. and M.A. in Child Development from the University of New Hampshire. Bye is widely recognized as one of Connecticut's leading authorities on early childhood education and has had a role in the development of five model preschool facilities in the past 10 years serving a combined 750 children. Bye has coached soccer, softball and basketball and is an active member of the West Harford Unitarian Universalist Church. She lives with her wife, two daughters and two step sons.

E-mail – beth.bye@cga.ct.gov



Representative Thomas G. Carmody, Jr. was elected to House District 6 in 2008. While still new to the House Carmody, is no stranger to the district's political scene, as he previously served on the Shreveport City Council. Thus far in the House Carmody has been most successful with bills addressing protections for youth and the public education system. He passed a bill in 2009 strengthening the crime of indecent behavior with juveniles and is always thinking outside of the box.

Representative Carmody is a real estate broker who is a graduate of Jesuit High School in Shreveport and attended Louisiana State University where he obtained a B.F.A from the College of Design. E-mail – carmodyt@legis.state.la.us



Representative Stephen F. Carter was elected to the Louisiana State House in 2007. He currently is a member of the Education; Municipal, Parochial, and Cultural Affairs; and Ways and Means Committees. In addition to his political involvement Representative Carter is the Past President of University Lab School Foundation, Past Board Member of Children's Charter School, Past President of EBR Alumni Association (LSU). Carter currently is a member of First Presbyterian Church, YMCA and volunteered in the 1996 Olympics. Representative Carter received his B.A. from Louisiana State University. E-mail – carters@legis.state.la.us



Representative Kelly Cassidy was appointed in May of 2011 to fill Illinois' 14th District as State Representative. She is an organizer, a legislative director and a mom. Whether fighting for women and LGBT rights as an activist, working for a smarter criminal justice system within the state's attorney's office, or ensuring that her three boys have safe spaces to play in our community, she has devoted the last two decades to making government more accessible, efficient and effective.

Those experiences, both inside and outside the system, have afforded her great insight into how to be a better, more responsive and effective State Representative for her district. Cassidy has worked as legislative director for the Chicago office of the National Organization for Women, constituent service lead running Illinois Senator John Cullerton's district office, at the Cook County State's Attorney's Office and as both an advocate and as a professional on issues such as choice, equality, social justice, access to quality health care and child care. Cassidy's combination of non-profit sector, state and local government experience provides her with unique perspective, expertise and understanding that empowers her to serve as an outstanding representative for the 14th district.

Cassidy is a member of Temple Sholom, and lives in Andersonville with her sons and partner. E-mail – kmcchicago1@gmail.com



Representative Connie Doepke was elected to the Minnesota House of Representatives in 2008. During her first term, she had a seat on two different education committees, and set about trying to loosen some of the state mandates on public schools. And in her second term, beginning in 2010 she is Vice-Chair of the Education Reform Committee, and also serves on the Higher Education and Taxes Committees. Doepke brings corporate experience to her work as a lawmaker, having spent two decades as a fashion industry corporate officer. In 1997, she was elected to the Wayzata School Board; she stayed on the board for eight years. At the time, Doepke was also a member of the Twin West Chamber of Commerce, Minnesota's second largest chamber, eventually serving as the chamber's education advisor.

Representative Doepke received her B.A. degree in Communication from Michigan State University. She lives in Orono, Minnesota with her husband and has two children. E-Mail – rep.connie.doepke@house.mn



Assemblywoman Marilyn Dondero Loop was first elected in 2008. During the 2009 legislative session, she served on the Education Committee; the Judiciary Committee; the Corrections, Parole and Probation Committee and the Transportation Committee. Assemblywoman Dondero Loop represents Assembly District 4 in northwestern Clark County in Nevada. As a retired educator Assemblywoman Dondero Loop is committed to providing students and teachers the resources they need to be successful.

Assemblywoman Dondero Loop is a native of Las Vegas. She is a graduate of Las Vegas High School and received her B.S. in Elementary Education, M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction, and a media specialist credential from UNLV. Dondero Loop is the mother of three adult daughters and the grandmother of one. E-mail – marilyndonderoloop@gmail.com



Representative Elaine Elliott ran and was elected to the South Dakota State House of Representatives, after her husband had to step down because of term limits. She is serving in her second term. She is a retired elementary teacher and has been in the education field for 40 years. She has a Master's Degree in Elementary Education plus 32 hours of post-graduate study. She lives in Aberdeen, South Dakota with her husband Burt and dog Buster. Burt and she have one son, Shad.

Elliott has always had an acute interest in early learning for children. She realizes that children without early learning experiences begin school far behind their peers, are highly unlikely to catch up, and will more probably drop out of school later on. Representative Elliott's leisure interests include reading, camping, woodworking, and spending time on the computer.

E-mail – ebelliott1@abe.midco.net



Assemblywoman Lucy Flores born and raised in North Las Vegas. Assemblywoman Flores was elected to the Nevada Assembly in November 2010 joining three other Hispanic females in becoming the first Hispanic women to serve in the Nevada legislature. As a fierce advocate for her community, Flores has volunteered for outreach programs across the state. In 2008, she was appointed to the Nevada Commission on Minority Affairs.

Assemblywoman Flores studied political science at the University of Southern California while working in the School of Policy Planning and Development and was an Unruh Institute of Politics scholar. After graduating college Flores attended William S. Boyd School of Law at the University of Nevada Las Vegas where she received her Juris Doctorate. Once the Nevada Assembly session comes to a close Flores works as a trial attorney at Maddox, Isaacson & Cisneros, LLP.

E-mail – lucy@lucyflores.com



Representative Robyn Gabel has served in the legislature since April 2010. She is Vice-Chair of the Appropriations for Human Services Committee and a member of the Insurance and Healthcare Disparities committees among others. Throughout her career, she has maintained a strong commitment to serving the people of Illinois as an advocate for women, children and families. Representative Gabel served as the Executive Director of the Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition from 1988 – 2010 and previously worked at Planned Parenthood and women’s health centers. She has a B.A. from Beloit College, an M.S.P.H. from the University of Illinois at Chicago, School of Public Health and an M.J. in Health Law from Loyola University Chicago. She is on the board of the Campaign for Better Health Care and the

Heartwood Center. Representative Gabel is a member of the Illinois Commission on the Elimination of Poverty, the Legislative Medicaid Advisory Committee and the Perinatal Advisory Committee for the state of Illinois. She also serves on the Human Services Committee of the Council of State Government.

E-mail – staterepgabel@RobynGabel.com



Representative Mary Stuart Gile is a 8th term state representative from Merrimack District 10 serving as Minority Policy Leader on the New Hampshire House Committee on Education. She is chair of the Legislative Task Force on Work and Family and is cofounder and current chair of the Legislative Caucus for Young Children. Representative Gile has sponsored and cosponsored bills related to child protection, early learning, health and education and is the prime sponsor of the statute creating the professional credential and career lattice system for teachers in early care and education.

In addition to legislative responsibilities, Representative Gile has been a consultant in early childhood and educational services, served on numerous boards in her community, has been honored with leadership appointments by New Hampshire Governors and is the recipient of several distinguished leadership awards. The Dr. Mary Stuart Gile Award is presented annually by the Bureau of Child Development.

Representative Gile graduated from McGill University and became a naturalized citizen in 1969. She then received a M.Ed. in Elementary Education with a minor in Early Childhood Education from UNH, completed postgraduate courses in Infant and Toddler Development at Harvard University, and earned a doctorate of education from George Peabody College of Vanderbilt University.

E-mail – mary.gile@leg.state.nh.us



Senator David Givens was elected to the Kentucky State Senate in 2008 and represents the 9th District. Senator Givens is chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee. He was also appointed to the Education Committee and the Transportation Committee. He also serves on the Tobacco Settlement Agreement Fund Oversight Committee and the Administrative Regulation Review Subcommittee. He has been appointed to serve on two special gubernatorial task forces: Unemployment Insurance Task Force and the Bio-Fuels and Alternative Energy Task Force.

In his private life, Senator Givens is a managing partner of Central Farmers Supply in Greensburg. He and his family raise grain crops and beef cattle on their 150-acre farm in Green County. Senator Givens holds a Bachelors of Science in Agriculture and a Master of Arts in Communication both from Western Kentucky University. Senator Givens is an Elder at Ebenezer Presbyterian Church. He and his wife have three children. E-mail – david.givens@lrc.ky.gov



Senator Margaret Rose Henry has served in the Delaware State Senate since 1990 and has served as Majority Whip since June 2009. Currently the Chairwoman of the Senate Health and Social Services Committee and a member of the Senate Public Safety, Community and County Affairs, Education, and the Joint Finance Committee. Throughout her legislative tenure, she has been a strong advocate for improving education, protecting children and families and fighting crime, drugs and poverty.

Senator Henry has been active in the Delaware human service community for thirty years. Her volunteer activities are extensive and currently include serving on the Board of Trustees for the Medical Center of Delaware, and is a sustainer in the Junior League of Wilmington. Senator Henry has been honored by the Delaware YWCA as a “Woman of the Next Century” and is the recipient of the Delaware Chapter of the ACLU’s “Gerald E. Kandler Memorial Award”.

Senator Henry earned a degree from Texas Southern university and holds a Master’s degree in Community Development and Leadership from Springfield College. Above all, she is a proud mother of two grown sons and enjoys being a grandmother. E-mail – mrh9220@aol.com



Senator Terrie W. Huntington had already served three-and-a-half terms as District 25 Representative when she was named Senator for Kansas District 7 in a mid-term election. Senator Huntington has ties to rural Kansas, a background in communications and consensus building skills. More recently Huntington has participated as in an Emerging Leaders Program through the University of Virginia and was awarded the Stand Up, Speak Out Award by the Mainstream Education Foundation.

As a Kansas native Huntington participates in the Kansas Children’s Cabinet, Shawnee Mission Education Foundation Board and PTA President at Shawnee Mission East High School – just to name a few. She is a University of Kansas graduate, Village Presbyterian Church member and has been married for 40 years, has two children and two grandchildren. E-mail – terriehuntingotn@mail.com



Senator Donzella James was elected to the State Senate in 1994. After retiring and offering herself to serve in the US Congress James was re-elected in 2009 to once again serve as State Senator. James is a member of the Education and Youth, Special Judiciary, State Institutions and Property, and State and Local Governmental Operations committee. Throughout her tenure Senator James has earned the reputation of being the voice of the voiceless. Among many prestigious awards James was a recipient of the freshman of the Year Legislator award in 1994, and awarded Legislator of the Year in both 1997 and 2000. She has been co-founder and chairperson of the Task Force for Good Government; served on the Benjamin E.

Mays High School advisory Council; and the Board of Directors Advisory Committee of the Atlanta Job Corporation; to name just a few.

Senator James earned a Bachelor degree in criminal justice and political science from Morris Brown College and received an honorary Doctorate of Humanities from Macon’s Emmanuel Bible College and studied additionally at Georgia State University. Senator James has been married for more than 35 years is a proud parent of two and grandparent of three. E-mail – donzella.james@senate.ga.gov



Senator Laura Kelly elected in 2004, is the Ranking Minority Member of the Senate Ways and Means Committee and the Public Health and Welfare Committee. Previously, Kelly was Executive Director of the Kansas Recreation and Park Association, and Director of Recreation Therapy/Physical Education at both National Jewish Hospital for Respiratory and Immune Disease, Denver, and Rockland Children’s Psychiatric Center, New York. In 2003, Senator Kelly was appointed to serve on the Kansas Children’s Cabinet by Governor Kathleen Sebelius. The Cabinet evaluates early childhood programs and makes funding recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature. In 2011, the Kansas Head Start Association named Kelly its State Champion. State Kelly resides in Topeka, Kansas with her husband, Ted Daughety, MD and has two adult daughters. E-mail – laura.kelly@senate.ks.gov



Senator Brian Kelsey served five years as a State Representative before being elected to the Senate in 2009. In his second year in the Senate he passed through the Senate the Equal Opportunity Scholarship Act to allow low-income children to attend the K-12 schools of their choice. He was awarded the 2011 Memphis Area Association of Governments Legislator of the Year. As a State Representative, Kelsey served as Republican Floor Leader and later as Chairman of the Civil Practice Subcommittee. He was selected to the Memphis Business Journal “Top 40 Under 40” as well as the Business Tennessee Magazine “30 Under 30”.

Senator Kelsey is an attorney practicing law in the areas of probate, civil litigation defense, contracts, and business formation. He received his law degree from Georgetown University and his undergraduate degree, with honors, from the University of North Carolina. Senator Kelsey attends Fellowship Memphis church, where he sings in the choir and is a former 1st grade Sunday School teacher. In his free time enjoys playing “Rock Band” with his niece and nephews, watching basketball, reading, playing softball, practicing his Spanish, and traveling.

E-mail – sen.brian.kelsey@capitol.tn.gov



Representative Samantha Kerkman has served in the Wisconsin State Assembly since 2001. She currently serves as chair of the Committee on Ways and Means and co-chair of the Joint Committee on Audit. Representative Kerkman is also appointed to the National Conference of State Legislatures Budget and Revenue Committee. In addition to her Legislative memberships, Representative Kerkman maintains the following county memberships: the Racine County Emergency Management Planning Committee, Kenosha County Community Correction Committee, and the Kenosha County Local Emergency Planning Committee. Representative Kerkman has been recognized by the Wisconsin American Legion, the Wisconsin Funeral Directors Association, the Wisconsin Farm Bureau

Federation, The Dairy Business Association, the Wisconsin Builders Association, Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce, Wilmot Union High School, the Kenosha County Council of the American Legion, the Republican Party of Kenosha County and the Republican Party of Wisconsin.

E-mail – Rep.Kerkman@legis.wisconsin.gov



Senator Nancy J. King was elected in 1994 to the Montgomery County Board of Education and quickly rose through the leadership ranks, until 2002 when elected to Maryland's House of Delegates. As a member of the House of Delegates, King served on the Ways and Means Committee where, in 2006, she became the Chair of the Education sub-committee. In September of 2007, King was sworn in as Senator for District 39 filling a vacant seat. In November of 2010 Senator King won the election to continue representing her District in the Senate. King has become an active leader in the Senate and was recognized as the 2011 State Legislator of the Year by the National Biotechnology Industry Organization. King is also the Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Children, Youth & Families.

Senator King was born in Niagara Falls, New York. She graduated from the Niagara Falls public school system and attended Niagara County Community College. E-mail – Nancy.King@senate.state.md.us



Senator Garrett Mason was elected by the people of District 17 in Maine in the November 2010 election. Mason was raised in Lisbon Falls, a graduate of Calvary Christian Academy and holds a BS degree in Management and Marketing from Pensacola Christian College. Additionally, he has completed graduate work at Southern New Hampshire University of Business Administration and the Art Institute of Pittsburgh in Graphic Design. Senator Mason has been lucky enough to fulfill a lifelong dream and work for the Portland Sea Dogs, AA affiliate of the Boston Red Sox. After his time at the Sea Dogs came to an end, Mason joined the Lewiston MAINEiacs, the only American member of the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League. Mason currently lives in Lisbon Falls and attends East Auburn Baptist Church.

E-mail – garrettpaulmason@gmail.com



Representative Michael D. McClellan is in the middle of his first term representing the Maine communities of Raymond, Frye Island and parts Poland and Standish. Mike has been married to Michelle Paradis McClellan, an elementary principal, for 28 years and they have two adult children. McClellan has over 30 years experience in the fields of mental health, education and economic development. Most recently, he was the executive director of a local Maine chamber of commerce and was named the state of Maine Chamber Executive Director of the Year in 2007. In his current role as a consultant, Representative McClellan takes on special projects for growing organizations focusing on issues of economic development and organization development. In his first year as a Maine representative McClellan was asked to join two of the busiest committees: Education and Cultural Affairs; and Regulatory Reform and Fairness. He is also is a leader in a strong Christian Caucus. McClellan is very active in his church, on the board of an exceptional health care organization and has been involved in all areas of volunteering in his hometown of Raymond including time on both the local school board and as a selectman. He enjoys spending time with his family and being outdoors. E-mail – mmccllell@maine.rr.com



Representative Carol McFarlane was elected to serve in the Minnesota House of Representatives in 2006 and is now in her third term. At the legislature she is currently the lead co-chair of the bi-partisan Minnesota House Redesign Caucus. She previously co-chaired a committee that studied shared services and created the Collaborative Governance Council in 2010. She currently serves as Vice Chair for Jobs & Economic Development in addition to serving on the Education Reform, Government Operations/Elections and the Legacy Funding Committees.

Representative McFarlane is Vice President/Treasurer of a small family owned

business in Maplewood. McFarlane has been a community leader for over 30 years in a variety of organizations including White Bear Lake School Board Member, Past Board member of the White Bear Area Chamber of Commerce, and has received recognition for her work in the areas of education and business. E-mail – rep.carol.mcfarlane@house.mn



Representative John H. Merrill was elected to represent the people of District 62 in the Alabama State House of Representatives in November 2010. He serves as the Secretary/Treasurer of the House Republican Caucus and is a member of other committees such as Economic Development and Tourism and Rules Committee to name a few. In October 2011, Merrill was presented the “2011 Axe Award” by the Alabama Association of Volunteer Fire Departments and became only the second freshman to be recognized as their Legislator of the Year.

A graduate of the University of Alabama Representative Merrill has been Director of Community Relations and Community Education for the Tuscaloosa County Board of Education. He is past president of both the Alabama School Communicator’s Association and the Alabama Community Education Association. In 2010, Governor Bob Riley appointed Merrill to serve as Chairman of the Board of Directors for the State Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention. Representative Merrill and his wife, an elementary school principal, have two children. E-mail – john.merrill@alhouse.gov



Assemblymember Holly J. Mitchell was elected in November 2010 to represent the 47th Assembly District in California. She chairs the Assembly’s Budget Subcommittee on Health & Human Services, and is a member of the Committees on Accountability & Administrative Review, Appropriations, Budget, Health, and Public Safety. Before becoming an Assemblymember, Mitchell worked as chief executive officer of Crystal Stairs where she championed statewide family-focused policymaking. Mitchell has also worked in State Senator Diane Watson’s district office, as a policy analyst for the California Senate’s Health and Human Services Committee and as a legislative advocate with the Western Center for Law and Poverty. Assemblymember Mitchell studied at the University of California at

Riverside and is the proud mother of a child in middle-school. E-mail – holly.mitchell@asm.ca.gov



Representative Pam Myhra is currently in her first term as Minnesota State Representative for House District 40A and serves on the Capital Investments, Education Finance, Education Reform and Tax committees. Myhra is a certified public accountant with an inactive license. As a manager for an international public accounting firm, KPMG, she specialized in banking, insurance, and government until placing her career on hold to have a family. In the following years she devoted her energies to the education of her three children, community service, and political activism.

Since the mid-1990’s she served as director of a girls’ club and teacher of numerous parenting classes, in addition to other volunteer community projects. Representative Myhra has been married for 30 years and is an active member of Bethesda Church. E-mail – rep.pam.myhra@house.mn



Senator Louis Pate represents District 5 which includes most of Wayne County, all of Greene County, and parts of Pitt County in North Carolina. He is currently the co-chair of the Appropriations on Health and Human Services and Health Care committees. He also serves on the Appropriations/Base Budget, Education, Judiciary, Pensions and Retirement and Aging, Program Evaluation, and State and Local Government committees. He describes himself as family man, has been married to his wife, Joyce, for over 44 years, and has three children and nine grandchildren. He served as a pilot in the U.S. Air Force and has owned and operated a successful building supply business for many years. As a former mayor and North Carolina state House Representative, and as husband to a career educator, he believes that he has the perspective and experience necessary to tackle many of the problems facing eastern North Carolina today. E-mail – Louis.Pate@ncleg.net



Representative Nora Slawik is serving in her seventh term in the Minnesota House of Representatives elected from two east metro suburbs of Oakdale and Maplewood. She is the lead Democrat on Early Learning Finance and served as the Chair of the Early Learning Finance Committee for two terms. Her current committees include Ways and Means, Health and Human Services Finance and State Government Finance.

Representative Slawik earned her MPA from the University of Minnesota, Humphrey School and her B.S. from Arizona State University. She teaches at the University of Minnesota and has worked in various non-profits organizations. She serves on the Autism Society of Minnesota Board, the North Star Scouting Board and the House-Senate Joint Autism Task Force. She is the parent of two children and a co-leader for a Girl Scout Troop. E-mail – rep.nora.slawik@house.mn

Legislative Staff Participants



Sarah Archibald, Ph.D. is an Education Policy Advisor in the State of Wisconsin. She has been engaged in various aspects of education policy for the past 13 years. Beginning at the Consortium for Policy Research in Education, she spent a decade focused on how schools reallocate resources to improve performance, coauthoring two books and numerous articles on the subject. She has also studied teacher compensation, school finance adequacy, professional development, and school reform. More recently, she spent two years at the Value-Added Research Center working on projects examining charter schools, the effectiveness of mentoring programs and tying use of resources to student outcomes. During the first round of Race to the Top, she was invited to lead the state effort on the competitive grant from Governor Doyle’s office. She now works for a Senator on the other side of the aisle, believing that evidence-based policies that improve people’s lives should not be a question of partisan politics. A mother and a yoga instructor, she believes that the combination of connecting with people on a personal level and sharing experiences, combined with the strategic use of empirical evidence, has the power to transform our current tendency to implement short-sighted policies into a strategy of investing in a long-term agenda in which the benefits far outweigh the costs. E-mail – sarah.archibald@legis.wi.gov



Rachel S. Gudgel is a Senior Fiscal Analyst with the New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee (LFC). Rachel is responsible for fiscal oversight and budget recommendations for public education agencies to the New Mexico State Legislature. Her portfolio includes the Public School Support, the Public Education Department, the Public School Facilities Authority, and Regional Education Cooperatives. Rachel graduated *cum laude* from the University of New Mexico School of Law in 2004. Prior to her employment with the LFC, she was an analyst for New Mexico Senate Democratic Caucus, and worked as an attorney at the Office of the Public Defender representing delinquent juvenile clients.

E-mail – rachel.gudgel@nmlegis.gov



Marsheilah Lyons is a Principal Research Analyst with the Research Division of the Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB), State of Nevada. The saying, “If you are not a part of the solution you are probably a part of the problem” has shaped her choice in careers and has encouraged Marsheilah into community and public service. Before joining LCB, she worked in several management positions with the aim of engaging neighborhoods and individuals in the effort to improve their communities.

Marsheilah served as a regional coordinator for the U.S. Department of Justice “Weed and Seed” Northern Nevada Program through the Reno Police Department. Marsheilah was appointed to the Washoe County Social Services Advisory Board in 1998 and served for three years. Additionally, Marsheilah served on the State of Nevada Committee for the Protection of Children. Marsheilah continues her commitment to add value to her community by serving, for over 10 years, as primary Policy Analyst and staff support to the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services during the Nevada Legislative Session and as Policy Analyst to the Legislative Committee on Health Care.

E-mail – mlyons@lcb.state.nv.us



Patsy L. Pierce, Ph.D. worked as a speech-language pathologist serving all ages for over 20 years in a variety of settings including home and center-based early intervention, public schools, and residential facilities. She has served as an early childhood and disabilities consultant in Israel, Bahrain, and Mongolia and taught augmentative and alternative communication at the Universidad Mayor de San Simon in Cochabamba, Bolivia. She has presented on emergent literacy and children with and at risk for disabilities in 48 states and 6 countries. Until joining the North Carolina legislative staff, she was on the National Head Start Family Literacy Center Advisory Board and was the Language and Disability Consultant for this National Center. She

recently co-authored, implemented and evaluated “The Time is Now in Pre-K” Early Reading First grant with Karen Erickson and Haven Harrelson.

As a legislative analyst at the North Carolina General Assembly, Pierce is staff to the following committees: Senate Education/Higher Education, House Education, Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, Senate Mental Health and Youth, Joint Legislative Health and Human Services Oversight Committee, House Select Committees on Education Reform, Early Education Improvement, and Childhood Obesity. E-mail – patsy.peirce@ncleg.net



James Touchton has served as a Senior Policy Analyst in the Georgia Senate Research Office since December 2007. His responsibilities include staffing the Senate Education & Youth committee, along with the Senate State Institutions and Properties committee, the Senate State and Local Governmental Operations committee. Previously, he staffed the Senate Higher Education and Senate Science and Technology Committees. In addition, James has staffed numerous study committees, most notably the State Education Finance Study Commission, which is currently examining and changing many aspects of the current funding formula in Georgia and other policy initiatives. Prior to his service in the Senate, he served as a legislative aide to Representative David Casas and as a fundraiser for various Representatives.

James received his Bachelors of Political Science in 2006 and Master of Public Administration in 2009 from Kennesaw State University in Kennesaw, Georgia, where he served as Student Government Association President and remains actively involved in alumni affairs and university advancement and advises the men of Delta Tau Delta Fraternity. E-mail – james.touchton@senate.ga.gov



Sharon Wenger is a Principal Analyst for the Kansas Legislative Research Department. For the past five years, Sharon has been the key legislative research staff member answering requests regarding early childhood education and K-12 education issues. She provides staff and research support to several legislative committees and subcommittees reviewing early childhood education in Kansas. From 1998 to 2006, Sharon worked for the Kansas Department of Health and Environment in various administrative positions, including two years as the agency's Assistant Secretary. In that position, she served on the Kansas Children's Cabinet –

the entity that oversees the spending of tobacco settlement funds for early childhood programming. Sharon also served as an ex officio member of the Kansas Interagency Coordinating Council on Early Childhood Development. Sharon holds a master's degree in public administration from the University of Kansas and a bachelor's degree from Kansas State University in political science. She is currently a member of the National Conference of State Legislature's Research and Committee Staff Section Executive Committee. E-mail – Sharon.Wenger@KLRD.ks.gov

Early Learning Fellows Faculty



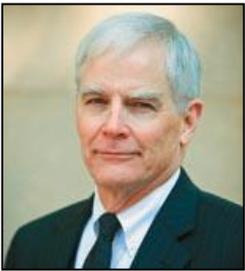
W. Steven Barnett, Ph.D., is a Board of Governors Professor and Director of the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at Rutgers University. His research includes studies of the economics of early care and education including costs and benefits, the long term effects of preschool programs on children's learning and development, and the distribution of educational opportunities. Dr. Barnett earned his Ph.D. in economics at the University of Michigan. He has authored or co-authored over 160 publications including 16 books. Research interests include the economics of human development and practical policies for translating research findings into effective public investments. His best known works include: reviews of the research

on long-term effects; benefit-cost analyses of the Perry Preschool and Abecedarian programs; randomized trials comparing alternative approaches to educating children including length of day, mono-lingual versus dual-language immersion, and the Tools of the Mind curriculum; and, the series of State Preschool Yearbooks providing annual state-by-state analyses of progress in public pre-K. E-mail – sbarnett@nieer.org



Rolf H. Grafwallner, Ph.D., currently is the Assistant State Superintendent of the Division of Early Childhood Development at the Maryland State Department of Education. The Division is responsible for the technical support to local school systems regarding prekindergarten and kindergarten. It also includes the responsibility for licensing, monitoring, and enforcement of child care programs. It provides funding under Quality improvement portion of the Child Care Development Fund, the state's Child Care Resource and Referral Network and the Family Support Centers Network. In addition it offers a number of initiatives to improve the quality of early care and education in Maryland, such as the Maryland Model of School Readiness (MMSR), MSDE Standards for Implementing Quality Early Learning Programs, Judy Centers, Early Childhood Accreditation Project, Child Care Credentialing Project, and prekindergarten and kindergarten content standards as well guidelines for early care and learning (birth to age 3). Grafwallner has more than 20 years of experience in early childhood education as a teacher, education supervisor, program director, and state administrator. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Maryland in the area of Education policy, Planning, and Administration. |

E-mail - rgrafwal@msde.state.md.us



Ron Haskins, Ph.D., a former White House and congressional advisor on welfare issues, co-directs the Brookings Center on Children and Families. An expert on preschool, foster care, and poverty – he was instrumental in the 1996 overhaul of national welfare policy. Haskins received his B.A. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and has also received a M.A.T. and Ph.D.

E-mail - rhaskins@brookings.edu



Representative Ruth Kagi, is a small-business owner and represents the 32nd District, of Washington State. She chairs the House Early Learning & Human Services Committee. Nationally, she is the past-chair of the National Conference of State Legislature's Human Services Committee. Kagi's long history of community and public service includes serving as Vice President of the League of Women Voters of Washington. She received her B.A. from the University of Washington and M.P.A. from Syracuse University. During her ten plus years in the legislature, she has focused on improving early learning and child care, strengthening foster care, and reforming the state's drug sentencing and truck safety laws.

E-mail - ruth.kagi@leg.wa.gov



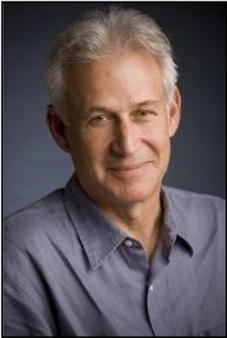
Geoff Nagle, Ph.D., M.P.H., L.C.S.W., is currently Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Health at Tulane University; Director at Tulane University Institute of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health; State Director of BrightStart – Louisiana's Early Childhood Advisory Council; and a Policy Fellow at the Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs – Manship School of Mass Communication at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. Nagel works closely with state government leaders to enhance Louisiana's early childhood system and to increase the opportunities to provide high quality early care and education.

Nagle received a B.A. from Duke University, M.S.W. from Tulane University School of Social Work, M.P.H. from Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine and his Ph.D. from Tulane University in the field of Mental Health Policy Research. E-mail - gnagle@tulane.edu



Robert C. Pianta, Ph.D., is the Dean of the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia. The Novartis Professor of Education and director of UVA's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning, Pianta and his team of education researchers have proven what it take to build better teachers. A former special education teacher, Pianta's research focuses on investigating the effects of schooling on children's social and academic outcomes and on improving school and classroom experience through teachers' professional development.

Pianta received his B.S. and M.A from the University of Connecticut, and Ph.D from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. E-mail – piñata@virginia.edu



Jack Shonkoff, M.D., is the Julius B. Richmond FAMRI Professor of Child Health and Development at the Harvard School of Public Health and the Harvard Graduate School of Education; Professor of Pediatrics at Harvard Medical School and Children's Hospital Boston; and the Director of the university-wide Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. He also chairs the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, a multi-university collaboration comprising leading scholars in neuroscience, psychology, pediatrics, and economics, whose mission is to bring credible science to bear on policy affecting young children.

Shonkoff completed his undergraduate studies at Cornell University, medical education at New York University School of Medicine, pediatric training at Bronx Municipal Hospital Center and the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, and fellowship in developmental pediatrics at Harvard Medical School and Children's Hospital in Boston. He has been a visiting professor or delivered named lectureships at more than 30 universities in the United States, Australia, Canada, China, Israel, Japan, Mexico, and Puerto Rico. Prior to assuming his current position, he was the Samuel F. and Rose B. Gingold Professor of Human Development and Social Policy and Dean of The Heller School of Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University. E-mail – jack.shonkoff@harvard.edu

NCSL Staff

Steffanie Clothier is the program director for the Child Care and Early Education Project at the National Conference of State Legislatures. Her work includes providing technical assistance to legislatures, research and writing, convening legislative forums, and project development. Steffanie has more than twenty years of experience working on a variety of policy issues, ranging from children and families issues such as child care, welfare, Medicaid and children's health issues as well as environmental, immigration, and human rights issues. She has presented to numerous state legislatures and conferences and has authored or co-authored NCSL's publications addressing child care, early education and early learning financing, governance, school readiness and quality. She is a graduate of the University of Denver School of Law and Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut.

E-mail – steffanie.clothier@ncsl.org

Bruce Feustel has worked in or for state legislatures for 37 years. He currently is a Senior Fellow in NCSL's Legislative Management Program, where he provides training and educational programs for legislators and legislative staff and participates in management studies of legislatures. Bruce has organized and taught at committee chair and new legislator training seminars, provided skill training for staff, produced CDs on "How to be an Effective Legislator," provided staff support to NCSL's Legislative

Effectiveness Committee and made presentations on communication, change, facilitation and ethics. He has also facilitated strategic planning and consensus building meetings and projects with state

legislatures or committees in Iowa, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Washington, Maine, Colorado, Wisconsin and New Mexico and with the Navajo and Osage Nation legislative bodies. A former Wisconsin legislative attorney, Bruce periodically teaches and organizes seminars on bill drafting and the legislative process, including seminars held in 19 countries in Africa, Asia and Europe.

E-mail – bruce.feustel@ncsl.org

Alison May, is the Senior Staff Assistant with the National Conference of State Legislatures' Child Care and Early Childhood Education Project in Denver, Colorado. Her work includes coordinating meetings and assisting with smooth flow of department tasks. Prior to coming to NCSL in early 2011 Alison had worked at the American Civil Liberties Union of Colorado and at small non-profit located northeast of Denver that focused on civic engagement. Alison earned a Bachelor's degree in psychology from Rochester Institute of Technology and attended public schools in northern New Jersey. She came to Colorado to participate as an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer in 2002 and after completing her year of service decided to stay in Colorado. E-mail – alison.may@ncsl.org

Phuonglan Nguyen is a Policy Specialist with the National Conference of State Legislatures in the Children and Families Program. She conducts legislative research and policy analysis on home visiting, early childhood data systems, and innovative early learning and care policy-making in the states in addition to tracking early learning and care legislation and responding to legislators and staff information requests on early childhood issues. Ms. Nguyen has more than 15 years of experience in local community and leadership development, and project management for non-profit, foundation, and private and public entities. She has worked on multiple policy issues ranging from education and health care to local and state economic development as well as managed early childhood initiatives and provided direct services to low-income children and their families. She holds Master of Social Work with concentration in social policy, community development and program evaluation from the University of Denver.

Email – phuonglan.nguyen@ncsl.org

Julie Poppe is a Program Manager with the National Conference of State Legislatures' Child Care and Early Childhood Education Project in Denver, Colorado. She has been a member of the child care and early education project for over ten years where she provides a range of informational services to state legislators and legislative staff through technical assistance, publications, legislative educational presentations and research on issues related to early care and education for children from birth to age 5. Ms. Poppe has authored and co-authored publications on topics including child care financing, preschool, children's mental health services, and infant and toddler development and care. She recently coauthored a report entitled, *Early Care and Education State Budget Actions FY 2011*. Ms. Poppe holds a Master's degree in public administration from the University of Colorado at Denver and a Bachelor's degree in social work from the University of Wyoming. She also has experience in health policy and served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Kyrgyzstan.

E-mail – julie.poppe@ncsl.org