3 Things Research Staff Want You to Know

Research staff are masters of separating good information from the rest.

BY KAE WARNock

What Staff Know

This occasional series is dedicated to the little known and sometimes misunderstood work performed by the more than 30,000 legislative staff employees in state capitals across the country.

News websites and apps, newspapers, talk radio, TV broadcasts—legislators must filter more “noise” than ever as they consider today’s challenging policy issues.

As research staff, we provide well-written, accurate, objective data to inform these discussions. We take pride in knowing how to separate fact from fiction. Furnishing this service to the legislative institution is the reason many of us find our work so gratifying.

Legislators rely on us to gather solid information and distill it into the important facts they need.

We know how crucial it is to provide timely information in ways that are easily accessible and flexible.

Whether legislators need policy and statistical research or mapping and geographic analysis, they can turn to us to get it right.

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We understand the value of good data.

Whether doing general or specialized research, our role is to gather accurate data, then deliver the analysis legislators need to make important decisions.

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We know the importance of serving constituents.

The people of each state elect their legislators to be their voice in the statehouse. Constituents may want to speak before a committee, or they may have a problem they need help solving. We’re there to make it happen.

Sometimes legislators want to recognize a constituent for his or her accomplishments or express sympathy on the death of an important community member, and we make sure it hits the right note.

Many of us help legislators serve their constituents by providing information on how citizens can participate in the legislative process. We investigate and resolve constituent questions or provide professional, comprehensive casework. Often, we produce congratulatory and memorial resolutions for legislators to present to their constituents.

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We know how to work under pressure.

Legislators often do not have much lead time when requesting information; they need the research from us as soon as they realize there’s a question to be answered.

We produce and deliver our work efficiently so that it’s timely and useful. Meeting deadlines associated with legislative and committee work is critical to the success of any governing body. And we know that.

Further, we tap into the energy and speed of change to be effective and helpful to those we serve.

What Is RELACS?

The Research, Editorial, Legal and Committee Staff Association, known as RELACS, fosters professional development and communication through NCSL among state legislative employees who research, edit, provide legal services, staff committees, draft bills, revise codes, review and compile administrative rules, analyze policy and perform constituent services. As a staffer working in one of these areas, you are automatically a member of the association.

Go to ncsl.org/relacs for more information.

Find professional development training designed for staff at the Legislative Summit, Aug. 6-9, in Boston. ncsl.org/summit