Research and Committee Staff Section
National Conference of State Legislatures

RACSS Newsletter

RACSS Newsletter, Summer 2011

Chair's Column

RACSS Chair Pepper Sturm, Nevada

By Pepper Sturm
Chief Deputy Research Director, Legislative Counsel Bureau, Nevada
RACSS Chair 2010-2011

As this goes to press (or is it, "as this is transformed into digital data streams"?), I am looking forward to NCSL's annual Legislative Summit in San Antonio, August 8-11. As you can see in other portions of this newsletter, RACSS has an excellent program for the Summit this year, and I hope to see you there.

Regional Reports

Several years ago, we had a feature section of the RACSS newsletter called "News from the States." We had nine regional coordinators who would collect brief reports from the states in their assigned region to include in the newsletter. Topics in these reports could include an overview of major issues facing the state legislatures while in session, legislative staff restructuring, unusual pieces of legislation, or interesting reports generated by the agency. We would usually collect about 15 state reports, since time constraints and other considerations limited full participation for each issue of the newsletter.

Many of us found this to be an excellent method of keeping up the goings on in our own regions and in other parts of the country as well. As in my case, it often was an opportunity to involve additional junior-level or senior-level staff in RACSS activities, since the state-level staff directors often would assign these reports to new staff. In checking with their contacts in other states, the regional coordinators also used the process as an opportunity to network with their state counterparts. The regional coordinators were responsible for 5 to 7 states in their area; they collected the reports and forwarded them to Jeanne for inclusion in the newsletter.

If you think this feature should be revived and more importantly, if you would like to serve as a state contact person or a regional coordinator, please contact me at sturm@lcb.state.nv.us, or Jeanne Mejeur at jeanne.mejeur@ncsl.org.

Coming Attractions

Over the last several months, the Executive Committee has been working with our NALIT counterparts on the program elements for our Professional Development Seminar in Portland, Oregon, scheduled for October 2 through 5, 2011. We have planned a tour of the capitol in Salem, plus we have a number of interesting and informative presentations lined up with topics ranging from planning effective policy research to using technology to improve productivity. Please see the

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RACSS Officers 2010-2011

Chair: Pepper Sturm
Nevada

Vice Chair: Mark Mitchell
Kentucky

Immediate Past Chair:
Phil Price, Arkansas

Directors:

Dave Bohyer
Montana

Charlotte Carter-Yamauchi, Hawaii

Marti Harkness
Florida

Bryant Howe
Utah

Sabrina Lewellen
Arkansas

Walker Reagan
North Carolina

Secretary:
Jeanne Mejeur, NCSL

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RACSS Legislative Summit Programs

Below is the agenda for RACSS sessions and plenary programs for legislative staff at the NCSL Legislative Summit in San Antonio.

Thank you to the members of the RACSS Executive Committee for working together to develop the agenda and plan interesting and informative programs for RACSS members.

Monday, August 8, 2011

1:00 pm-2:45 pm

Using Census Data for Legislative Research

The newly released data from the U.S. Census Bureau provides a treasure trove of information for legislative research staff. Data can be used for statewide research, as well as for demographic data right down to the district level. Learn about the information available from the Census Bureau and get advice on ways to maximize your research skills.

Moderator: Mark Mitchell, Legislative Research Commission, Kentucky

Speaker: James Whitehorne, U.S. Census Bureau

Tuesday, August 9, 2011

3:30 pm-5:00 pm

Legislative Staff University: Ethics and the Box Office

Legislators and staff often confront ethical dilemmas that may not be about right or wrong, but which among several core values is most appropriate. Do they serve constituents or the state, individual members or the larger institution? See these choices play out in movie clips for an entertaining glimpse into how we make decisions in the workplace.

Speaker: Allan Wallis, professor, University of Colorado

Wednesday, August 10, 2011

1:00 pm-3:45 pm

Legislative Staff Workshop: So You Think Things Were Tough Before? Turning Challenges into Opportunities

Legislative staff faced many challenges before the recession began. Budget cuts have only made them worse. How do you deal with impending retirements, job competition, new members unsure of your value, increasing partisanship and incivility? Review survey results on what staff consider to be their greatest challenges and develop ideas about how best to resolve them.

Presiding: Tim Rice, Legislative Information System, Illinois

Panelists: Susan Byorth Fox, Legislative Services Division, Montana
Laura Clemens, House of Representatives, Ohio
Tim Mapes, Office of the Speaker of the House, Illinois
John O'Brien, Legislative Budget Board, Texas
Connie Ridley, Tennessee General Assembly
Gregory Schmidt, Senate, California Legislature

RACSS Legislative Summit Programs, continued

4:00 pm-5:30 pm

When Serving the Legislature Means Serving Constituents

Joint with the Personal Staff Network and the Leadership Staff Section

Thousands of citizens turn to their legislators when they encounter problems with government or businesses. Consequently, many legislative staff agencies and personal staff are called on to help constituents on behalf of those legislators. Several states have established constituent services programs to help citizens and maximize limited staff resources. Learn about the challenges and best practices in providing constituent services.

Moderator: Mark Mitchell, Legislative Research Commission, Kentucky

Panelists: Maryanne Jefferson, Chief of Staff to Senator Richard Ross, Massachusetts
Sabrina Lewellen, Constituent Services and Special Projects Manager, Senate, Arkansas
Pepper Sturm, Chief Deputy Research Director, Legislative Counsel Bureau, Nevada

"RACSS programs at the Legislative Summit focus on enhancing skills that can help you in your work for your legislature."

Pepper Sturm, RACSS Chair

Thursday, August 11, 2011

12:30 pm-2:00 pm

RACSS Business Meeting and Luncheon

Luncheon sponsored by LexisNexis

RACSS members will hold their annual Business Meeting, elect officers, present the Legislative Staff Achievement Award and plan activities for the coming year.

Presiding: Pepper Sturm, 2010-2011 RACSS Chair

2:30 pm-3:45 pm

Making History: Working for America's Legislatures

Working for the legislature is challenging and yet rewarding work. It's time to celebrate legislative staff for all you do on behalf of your legislatures and NCSL and the history you are making. Join us as we recognize outstanding staff contributions and practical solutions, and enjoy some great music along the way.

Presiding: Tim Rice, Legislative Information System, Illinois

4:00 pm-5:30 pm

Moving Beyond PowerPoint Fatigue

Joint with the Legislative Research Librarians and the Legislative Information and Communications Staff Section

We've all sat through presentations that were sabotaged by the accompanying PowerPoint slides: sometimes boring, sometimes distracting, but all too often, just ineffective. This session will look at techniques for improving PowerPoint presentations and explore other options to present information effectively.

Moderator: Walker Reagan, Director, Research Division, North Carolina

Speaker: Mark Leutwyler, Dell, Texas

2011 Slate of Candidates for RACSS Executive Committee

The 2011 RACSS Nominating Committee has met and offers the following slate of candidates for election to the RACSS Executive Committee for 2011-2012. The election of the slate will take place at the RACSS Business Meeting, on Thursday, August 11, 2011, at the NCSL Legislative Summit in San Antonio, Texas.

For the office of Vice-chair:

Walker Reagan, North Carolina
Walker Reagan is the Director of the Research Division for the North Carolina General Assembly. He has been with the General Assembly since 1992, previously serving as a Principal Legislative Analyst and Staff Attorney. Walker advises legislators and legislative staff on public records issues, legislative confidentiality and legislative immunity and has served as co-counsel to the Legislative Ethics Committee and the House Ethics Committee. Walker is a member of the Research and Committee Staff Section, the Legal Services Staff Section and the Standing Committees on Communications, Financial Services and Interstate Commerce, and Labor and Economic Development. He has participated in numerous NCSL and staff section programs. Walker received his bachelor's degree in political science and his master's degree in public policy sciences from Duke University and his law degree from the University of North Carolina. He is a graduate of the Legislative Staff Management Institute, class of 2003.

For Director (three openings)

Dave Bohyer, Montana
Dave is the Director of Office of Research and Policy Analysis, in the Montana Legislative Services Division. Dave has served as Director since 1987, having joined Montana legislative staff in 1981. Prior to that, Dave worked in public service positions in local government. In total, Dave has more than 30 years of experience in the legislative and public policy process. Dave just completed his first term as a Director on the RACSS Executive Committee.

Sabrina Lewellen, Arkansas
Sabrina is the Constituency Services and Research and Special Projects Manager for the Arkansas Senate. She has regularly attended NCSL annual meetings and RACSS Seminars, since 2005, and has been an active and involved member. Sabrina served on the 2007-2008 RACSS Advisory Council, an ad-hoc committee that provided input on professional development opportunities for RACSS members, and just completed her first term as a Director on the RACSS Executive Committee.. Sabrina is a graduate of the Legislative Staff Management Institute, class of 2009.

Sharon Wenger, Kansas
Sharon Wenger has worked for the Kansas Legislative Research Department since 2006 and currently services as a Principal Analyst, on K-12 education. She previously worked for the Kansas legislature, as staff to the Legislative Division of Post Audit, conducting performance audits of state agencies and programs. During that time, Sharon served on the executive committee of the National Legislative Performance Evaluation Society, one of the ten NCSL staff sections. In addition to her service in the Legislature, Sharon also worked for the Kansas Dept. of Health and Environment, and for the City of Topeka. Sharon holds a Master's degree in public administration from the University of Kansas and a Bachelor's degree in political science from Kansas State University. Sharon was named a Truman Scholar and inducted into Phi Beta Kappa.

Under the RACSS Bylaws, the Nominating Committee consists of the current RACSS Vice-chair, Immediate Past Chair, and one member of the staff section at large. Members of the 2011 RACSS Nominating Committee were Mark Mitchell of Kentucky, Phil Price of Arkansas and Charlotte Carter-Yamauchi of Hawaii.

RACSS Fall Seminar Agenda

Below is the outline of the agenda for the RACSS 2011 Professional Development Seminar. The seminar is being held October 2 –5, 2011, at the Hilton Portland Towers in Portland, Oregon. RACSS will be joined by our sister staff section, the National Association of Information Technology (NALIT). While the two staff sections are meeting separately for the most part, they will share a joint social event and spend Tuesday together at the State Capitol in Salem.

More details about programs and speakers will be available in the next few weeks. Check back for updates on the seminar website, at http://www.ncsl.org/?tabid=22509.

Downtown Portland, Oregon, with majestic Mt. Hood in the background.

Sunday, Oct. 2, 2011

1:00 pm – 5:30 pm	Registration
5:30 pm-6:30 pm	Dutch Treat Happy Hour

Monday, Oct. 3, 2011

7:30 am - 5:00 pm	Registration
8:00 am - 8:30 am	Continental Breakfast
8:30 am - 8:45 am	Welcome and Announcements
8:45 am - 10:00 am	Ready, Fire, Aim! Planning Effective Policy Research
10:15 am - 12:00 pm	Conducting 50-State Research and Evaluating Information Resources
12:00 pm - 1:00 pm	Lunch
1:00 pm - 2:30 pm	Succession Planning for Legislative Agencies
2:30 pm - 4:00 pm	Using GIS for Legislative Research and Policy Analysis
4:00 pm - 5:00 pm	Roundtable on the 2011 Legislative Session
6:00 pm	Opening Reception and Vendor Exhibits *(Joint with NALIT)*

Tuesday, Oct. 4, 2011

8:15 am - 8:30 am	Grab-and-Go Breakfast
8:30 am	Buses Depart for Trip to Salem
10:15 am - 11:45 am	Tour of the Oregon State Capitol and Overview of Oregon Legislative Research and Technology Staff Services *(Joint with NALIT)*
12:00 pm - 1:00 pm	Box Lunches
1:00 pm - 2:30 pm	Social Media Do's & Don'ts *(Joint with NALIT)*
2:45 pm - 4:00 pm	Using Technology to Increase Efficiency and Productivity *(Joint with NALIT)*
4:00 pm	Buses Depart for Return Trip to Portland
6:30 pm	Dutch Treat Dinners/Dinner on Your Own

Wednesday, Oct. 5, 2011

7:30 am - 12:00 pm	Registration
8:00 am - 8:30 am	Continental Breakfast
8:30 am - 10:00 am	Records Retention for Staff Documents: What to Save, How to Save, & Why You Save It
10:15 am - 12:00 pm	Researching and Applying Federal Laws and Regulations
12:00 pm	Seminar Concludes

Legislative Summit Live Streaming Sessions

Live Steaming sessions allow you to listen to NCSL Legislative Summit Programs at your desk in real time.

NCSL recognizes many legislators and legislative staff cannot travel to attend important meetings like the Legislative Summit during these tough budget times. This year, NCSL will offer 10 policy sessions—six streaming live and another four on demand—for only $159 * for legislators and legislative staff ($179 to non-members). You also can register for individual sessions for $69 for each session.
*Legislators and legislative staff, please email press-room@ncsl.org at NCSL for the member discount code before you purchase the Live Stream or On Demand package.

Sessions Available On Demand

Monday, August 8, 2011
12:00 pm - 2:00 pm Online Sales Taxes: Can They Be Collected?
3:00 pm - 4:15 pm Getting Voter Registration Right

Wednesday, August 10, 2011
2:30 pm - 3:45 pm States Transforming Medicaid

Thursday, August 11, 2011
8:00am - 9:15 am Is it Possible to Craft a Sensible Energy Policy?

Live Streaming Sessions

Wednesday, August 10, 2011
10:00 - 11:30 am Testing the Constitution: State Immigration Laws and the Courts
1:00 - 2:15 pm The U.S. Economy: When Will it Return to "Normal?"
2:30 - 3:45 pm Crisis Leadership

Thursday, August 11, 2011
8:00 am - 9:15 am Education Reform Through Choice, Charters and Vouchers
2:15 pm - 3:45 pm Collective Bargaining
4:00 pm - 5:30 pm Social Media and Mobile Technologies: Legislative Game-Changers

Bonus Live Streaming Sessions

If you purchase the entire package of programs, you'll also be able to participate in the two live streaming sessions listed below.

9:00 am - 9:30 am Live Q&A chat on state budget and fiscal conditions
Presenter: Arturo Pérez, Director, NCSL Fiscal Affairs Program

1:30 pm -2:00 pm Live Q&A chat on social media in state legislatures and elections
Presenter: Chris McCroskey, co-founder of Tweet Congress

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preliminary program and other program details on the seminar web site for additional information.

We have a promising year ahead of us. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve again as your RACSS chair, and I have had the pleasure of working with the vice chair, Mark Mitchell; our RACSS secretary, Jeanne Mejeur; and each of our talented directors over the past few years to provide the membership with interesting and productive professional development experiences through our web-based programs and at our scheduled meetings. We have a lot to look forward to in RACSS this year and for 2012, and I especially hope to see you this fall at the professional development seminar in Portland, Oregon. In the meantime, see you at the River Walk in San Antonio!