Changes and challenges are sure to be part of our professional lives in the next year, and I look forward to working with the NLPES Executive Committee during the year to ensure that NLPES is a source of information, insight, and inspiration as you grapple with those changes and challenges. We caught a glimpse of the coming changes and challenges in the weeks leading up to the NCSL Annual Meeting, and the Executive Committee will be working to serve your professional needs as the year unfolds.

What was happening in the late spring?
* Legislatures across the country worked to resolve record-level deficits, and turned to our offices for advice as they completed their work.
* Roger Brooks and John Turcotte, leaders in the development and practice of legislative program evaluation during the past 20 years, moved on to new endeavors, ending their careers with, respectively, the Minnesota and Florida Legislatures.
* Citizens ramped-up the pressure on elected officials to be ethically and fiscally responsible in discharging their public duties, and state and local officials experienced recall elections.
* While a few state legislatures debated bills to reconfigure legislative audit and evaluation agencies, efforts were underway in at least one state to create a program evaluation office.

These events are part of the backdrop for the fast-paced start of the 2003-04 year for NCSL. In August, some of our NLPES member offices sent new staff to the NCSL Basic Skills seminar in Chicago. Later in August and through September, staff sections were devoting energies to fall conferences, putting finishing touches on programs and planning to meet with colleagues to develop the human capital in their member offices and thereby enhance their legislative service capacity. Also, during the month of September, NCSL Staff Chair, Max Arinder, advised members of the LSCC of their Task Force assignments for the year.

Similarly, this year’s NLPES Executive Committee has already logged phone and e-mail time toward capacity building within our staff section. At our first full Committee meeting of the year, I posed two broad questions for the Committee to consider. First, are our antennae up and tracking the people who aren’t in attendance at our meetings? The staff and leaders of our offices, legislators, other NCSL staff sections, and the LSCC, as well as other professional organizations - how do we assess our NLPES activities in relation to these people? Are we providing direct services to them, or should we be learning from them? Is there an opportunity to partner with them and successfully marshal our resources to create something new?

My second question: How can we use technology within NLPES in new ways? Our offices work to identify efficiencies and improvements in the operations of state government, and technology is often part of the solution. We need to strive for the same results within NLPES, building on past successes and our current resources, which include: the NLPES website with its links to colleagues in other states, information about practices in other offices in the Question of the Month.
archives, and a library of NLPES newsletters and materials from recent conferences; the listserv; and conference calls to advance the multiple charges of the Executive Committee. We've not yet explored the potential of web-assisted teleconferences, video-conferencing, moderated listservs, and....?

The questions of whether the Executive Committee is alert to people not in attendance at our meetings or participating in our conference calls, and whether the Committee can use technology in new ways are intended to help ensure maximum value in the Committee's activities this year. The question for the balance of NLPES members is this: how will you connect with and contribute to the professional organization that is both specific to your daily work and an access point for information on changes and challenges in the legislative institution? Visit our website for some inspiration and contact one of your colleagues on the Executive Committee – your professional life will benefit from the experience.

Learning Opportunities at the 2003 NCSL Annual Meeting

Bob Boerner (NLPES Liaison, NCSL)

Chinese food, fog, and training sessions. This year's NCSL Annual Meeting and Exhibition, held in San Francisco, California, from July 21 – 25, offered all of these treats for meeting participants. The NCSL Annual Meeting gathered together over 6,000 legislative leaders, lawmakers, staff members and policy experts. NCSL's “Connecting America 2003” offered over 160 sessions on the hottest topics presented by the foremost experts.

The NLPES Executive Committee met twice during the week to discuss upcoming events for the staff section, including planning of the NLPES Fall Training Conference. Kate Wade, Program Evaluation Director, Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau, was named the new Chair of NLPES on July 24.

Marion Higa, Hawaii State Auditor, was one of the featured speakers on the “Managing Public Plans in Turbulent Times” session held on July 23. Marion summarized recent audits that her office completed of the Hawaii State Employees Retirement System. The concurrent session, sponsored by NLPES and the Labor and Workforce Development Committee, also offered a discussion on the management of employee pension funds.

Roger Brooks, the 2003 NLPES Outstanding Achievement Award winner, moderated the NLPES session, “Getting the Most for Our Money: The Role of Program Evaluation in Finding Savings.” Held on July 24, panel members included Marty Galvin (Colorado), Ken Levine (Texas) and Gary VanLandingham (Florida). The speakers offered explanations of how their states are cutting expenditures, making cuts or making resources go further.

The National Association of Legislative Information Technology staff section and NLPES cosponsored a session on “Evaluating Information Technology Expenditures in Hard Times.” The session was moderated by Michael Adams, Director, Office of Legislative Information Services, Colorado General Assembly. Speakers included Elaine Howle, (California State Auditor), Doug Cordiner (California Bureau of State Audits), and Mary Winkley (MGT of America).

At the NLPES Annual Business Meeting and Luncheon, on July 24, Martha Carter, Chair of the NLPES Awards Committee, presented awards to the Kansas Legislative Division of Post Audit and the Texas Sunset Advisory Commission for Excellence in Program Evaluation and to the Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor for Excellence in Research Methods. A total of 23 offices were presented Recognition of Impact certificates. Gary Olson (Michigan), NCSL Staff Chair, and Max Arinder (Mississippi), incoming NCSL Staff Chair, thanked NLPES members for their contributions to NCSL and discussed NCSL’s legislative staff agenda. Max Arinder also introduced incoming NCSL Staff Vice Chair Jim Greenwalt (Minnesota).

For more details, see the NLPES homepage at: http://www.ncsl.org/programs/nlpes/training/animeee/t/am03/03notes.htm.
Congratulations to Max Arinder, NCSL Staff Chair

During the recent NCSL Annual Meeting held in San Francisco, California, delegates elected Max Arinder as the NCSL Staff Chair for 2003-2004. Max is Executive Director of Mississippi's Joint Legislative PEER Committee, where he has been employed since 1981.

Max's contributions to NLPES and NCSL have been varied and numerous. From 1990 through 1993, Max served as the secretary, vice-chair, and chair of the NLPES Executive Committee. Max has also been a frequent presenter and panelist at NLPES training conferences and seminars. From 1998 through the present, Max has served on the NCSL Executive Committee and Legislative Staff Coordinating Committee. Also, he has served on various NCSL task forces, committees, and international exchange delegations. Most recently, Max served as staff chair of the NCSL Assembly on State Issues and as the staff chair of the NCSL Special Subcommittee on the AFI/ASI Merger.

Other NLPES Members Have Served as Staff Chair

Since the creation of NCSL, at least three other NLPES members have served as Staff Chair—Dale Cattanach, John Turcotte, and Russ Larson. (Dale actually served portions of two terms.) At the request of the NLPES News, these former chairs share their perspectives of the position.

Dale Cattanach, Wisconsin (1985 and 1986)

First, congratulations to Max Arinder upon his election as NCSL Staff Chair. His great experience, knowledge and style all point to a very fruitful and satisfying tenure as Staff Chair.

Serving as NCSL Staff Chair was a tremendously rewarding and beneficial experience. During my term in office I visited many other states, met with legislators and staff and learned how they addressed the various issues that legislators and staff faced throughout the nation. Moreover, many of the friendships formed through interaction with legislators and staff remain some fifteen years after I left office.

My home state, Wisconsin, and my agency, the Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau, also gained from my involvement. As Staff Chair I was able to recommend Wisconsin legislators for appointment to some NCSL committees. The NCSL Executive Committee also met in our capital city. I was always in a good position to affect positive communication between our legislators and those from other states as well as NCSL staff. Not to be overlooked is the prestige that comes to a legislature and state by having someone serve at a high level in a national organization.

For the Audit Bureau staff, the benefits were huge. Training opportunities and, equally important, establishing contacts and relationships with other staffs made it possible for our staff to be in touch very quickly with someone across the country who could provide information and assistance on whatever evaluation or audit we were working on at any time. Further, because I was Staff Chair there was never a question of support for staff travel and training, which made possible, sending more staff to training sessions and conferences than otherwise would have been the case. In turn, staff learned from the training and conferences, leading to a more productive and effective staff. Staff morale is boosted because their director serves as the national leader of their organization.

The profession—program evaluation—and the National Legislative Program Evaluation Society get a real boost from having one of its members serve as NCSL Staff Chair. Within NCSL, the profession and staff section gain visibility, exposure and influence. The Staff Chair makes numerous appointments and influences others. In one's home state, it is likely that having the head of that state's evaluation agency serving as the leader of an organization representing thousands of legislative staff will not be lost on those being reviewed or evaluated. That was certainly my experience in Wisconsin. If recalcitrant department heads did choose to forget or ignore that, they were quickly reminded by members of our legislature.

Serving as NCSL Staff Chair is truly a priceless and memorable experience. I know Max will share that view at the end of his term. I am confident that he will do a great job for program evaluation and other staff. I wish him well.

John Turcotte, Mississippi (1993)

As Staff Chair, I realized that NCSL was masterful in pursuing the interests of state legislatures that are very different among states. NCSL differs from similar
government interest groups because state legislative staff participate in governing the organization. I watched three NCSL presidents while I served as Vice Chair, Chair and Past Chair. When NCSL interacted with the National Governors Association, the difference was quite apparent. Governors’ staff are not involved except to usher Governors in and out and assist with speech writing. Governors were also frustrated that NCSL would not agree to policy positions that had not been approved by the conference. Our legislator presidents were masterful negotiators, while the Governors were driven people used to overwhelming the people around them.

The Staff Chair works closely with the NSCL President and Director. The president and other legislator officers tend to be more interested in dues and governance issues and assuring bipartisanship almost to an extreme. They also focus on state versus federal issues and during my tenure the issues were taxation of mail order and Internet sales, unfunded federal mandates, and federal pre-emption. Staff officers focus more on state-to-state issues, legislative management, and staff section participation. NCSL staff and state legislative staff work very closely and have a natural affinity because we both work for legislators and perform the same tasks. I found NCSL staff very intelligent team people who were skilled writers and seasoned extemporaneous speakers. Among staff sections, the most powerful and oldest is the American Society of Legislative Clerks and Secretaries. It is very organized, preserves its traditions, keeps detailed records of its proceedings, and has produced most of the Staff Chairs. NLPES is respected for its high quality training programs and for the policy analysis and research skills of our membership.

**Russ Larson, Delaware (1996)**

Becoming Staff Chair was both more professionally and personally rewarding than I could have imagined. After serving with NLPES, NALIT, and NALFO, followed by the Executive Committee and Legislative Staff Coordinating Committee (LSCC), I thought I had a pretty good idea of the operations of NCSL. As Staff Chair, I learned that there is far more to the organization. The commitment of NCSL staff, trying to balance the needs of the states and their respective staffs and legislatures, continuing to provide quality service through the staff sections, and, of course, maintaining NCSL as the "go to, quality" organization all take an inordinate amount of time. Attending all the fall staff section meetings was equally enlightening. There’s much more to the organization than most members can imagine.

From a personal perspective, serving as Staff Chair was simultaneously humbling and exciting. The many opportunities to assist the organization both nationally and internationally were exciting and challenging. Max will have his hands full with continuing to improve the staff sections, LSCC, and the many opportunities for professional development. With states scrambling to balance their budgets, this will be a lean year. Max’s leadership will be extremely important in attempting to juggle these responsibilities with fiscal realities.

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**Roger Brooks Recognized for Contributions**

The 2003 recipient of the NLPES outstanding achievement award is Roger Brooks, who retired in May 2003 from the Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor. A Michigan native, Roger received his BA in political science from the University of Michigan, and he received a masters and Ph.D in political science from Michigan State University.

Before working for the state of Minnesota, Roger taught political science at Macalester College in St. Paul. He has also taught at the University of Minnesota, University of Florida, Minnesota State University of St. Thomas, and Augsburg College.

Roger joined the Program Evaluation Division in the Minnesota Legislative Auditor’s Office in 1978. He managed various evaluations before his appointment as Deputy Legislative Auditor for Program Evaluation in 1984. Always interested in improving the impact and use of evaluation reports, Roger helped to introduce a variety of innovations during his tenure, including: bright blue covers; attractive report layouts with sidebars and photos; shorter executive summaries; roundtable meetings with legislators at the beginning of each evaluation; annual surveys of legislators to help the audit commission select program evaluation topics; and a detailed style manual for evaluation staff. Staff regularly sought Roger’s advice on...
research methods, and Roger was always on the lookout for bad graphics to add to his “hall of shame.”

In addition to advising staff on countless program evaluations, Roger also oversaw expansions of the office’s duties—to review agency performance reports (1993) and conduct local government best practice reviews (1994). Minnesota’s office twice received the NLPES Excellence Award under Roger’s leadership.

Roger made numerous contributions to NLPES. Elected to the NLPES Executive Committee in 1985, he served as chair for two years (1987-89). Roger organized the first NLPES training conference (Spring 1987, in St. Paul), and he organized another NLPES training conference in Minnesota in 1992. He encouraged NLPES to work cooperatively with other staff sections, was a regular panelist at NLPES training sessions, and served on various NLPES committees.

Beyond NLPES, Roger has also made many contributions to the evaluation field. He has served on the editorial advisory board of the American Evaluation Association’s “NEW Directions for Evaluation,” written articles and book chapters on program evaluation, and taught program evaluation classes.

As Minnesota Legislative Auditor Jim Nobles said when Roger retired, “Roger brought a powerful intellect to his job. A clear thinker and excellent writer, Roger has a deep understanding of evaluation research and a keen sense of how to produce evaluation reports that communicate effectively to a legislative audience.” Roger is looking forward to pursuing many of his other interests in retirement, including sailing, photography, travel, and working on historic preservation issues.

NLPES thanks Roger for his leadership at the Legislative Auditor’s Office and contributions to the staff section. We wish Roger well in his retirement.

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**Kansas Legislative Division of Post Audit and Texas Sunset Advisory Commission Receive Excellence in Evaluation Award**

From a pool of ten applicants, the Kansas Legislative Division of Post Audit and Texas Sunset Advisory Commission were selected to receive the Excellence in Evaluation Award during NSCL’s Annual Meeting in San Francisco. Both offices met the award criteria for: meeting legislative need; making an impact; communicating effectively through its work products; and assisting other NLPES offices.

Both offices have a history of addressing substantive issues in a timely fashion. As one Awards committee member put it, their applications demonstrated that they are the Legislature’s “go to” offices for advice on difficult issues. Examples from recent years include work by the Kansas office on economic development, corporate income taxes, Medicaid, and prison staffing, and work by the Texas office on economic development, housing and community affairs, and general services. The studies by both offices include substantive findings and recommendations, many of which led to major changes and significant financial savings.

These offices also make considerable efforts to make the information in their reports easy to understand. For example, Kansas organizes its reports around the questions answered by the audit, and the Texas commission organizes its reports to highlight the major issues identified during the study. In addition, both offices strive to widely disseminate their reports and key findings.

NLPES congratulates the Kansas Legislative Division of Post Audit and the Texas Sunset Advisory Commission for their service to their legislatures and their contributions to the field of program evaluation.
Kansas Legislative Division of Post Audit

(L to R) Kansas State Senator Lana Oleen, Martha Carter (Nebraska), and Barb Hinton, Kansas Legislative Auditor

Texas Sunset Advisory Commission

(L to R) Ken Levine, Deputy Director and Martha Carter (Nebraska)
Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor Receives Excellence in Research Methods Award

The awards Committee received four applications for the Excellence in Research Methods Award. The Committee found that the studies nominated for this award were all commendable. The project the Committee believed best met the selection criteria was Economic Status of Welfare Recipients, performed by the Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor.

This study sought to evaluate the economic status of current and former recipients of the Minnesota Family Investment Program, Minnesota’s replacement to the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program. To address this objective, the Office of the Legislative Auditor gathered extensive administrative data on the actual amount of income earned, cash and non-cash government assistance received, and taxes paid for a sample of 1,159 current and former MFIP families in calendar year 2000. In total, data was collected concerning twenty-eight possible sources of income and three tax liabilities.

With this data, the study was able to measure family income with and without non-cash benefits, which also allowed them to tailor the definition of income to make comparisons with other states. The Office of Legislative Auditor also developed a theoretical model to show how the total economic resources of a single parent with two children changes as the parent progresses from being unemployed to working full time at $22 per hour.

The Awards Committee was particularly impressed by the comprehensiveness of the Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor’s efforts to define and quantify family income; their analysis of the impact of cash and non-cash income on the incentive to work; and the direct tie-in between the study’s objectives, research design, and report conclusions. NLPES congratulates the Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor for a job well done!

Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor

(L to R) Roger Brooks, Deputy Director (retired), Minnesota State Senator Ann Rest and Minnesota State Representative Aaron Peterson

Twenty-Three States Awarded Certificates of Impact

During the NCSL Annual Meeting, NLPES awarded Certificates of Impact to the following states: Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Mexico, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Utah, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.
A few months ago, the Minnesota Legislative Auditor’s Office started a program evaluation of Minnesota’s tuition reciprocity agreements with several surrounding states. These agreements allow students to attend college in a neighboring state without having to pay nonresident tuition. During this evaluation, our office encountered a new challenge to its authority to obtain data necessary for an evaluation.

For some parts of our study, we needed to obtain data on individual students. For instance, legislators wanted to know the extent to which Minnesotans who participated in the program returned to Minnesota after graduation—and, similarly, whether residents of other states who attended college in Minnesota subsequently took jobs in Minnesota. To evaluate this, we planned to match students’ social security numbers against data on individual earnings in Minnesota. We requested student identifiers from Minnesota’s two public higher education systems and the Minnesota Higher Education Services Office (a state agency that administers the tuition reciprocity program).

Requirements of Minnesota State Law

Minnesota law requires public agencies to “exhibit all books, accounts, documents, and property that the legislative auditor may desire to inspect.” The law gives our office subpoena power, and it authorizes us to examine confidential data. Still, we spent weeks wrangling with attorneys about our office’s authority to access individual student records. Specifically, attorneys representing state higher education officials wanted to ensure that our request complied with the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). FERPA is a 1974 law that applies to all schools that receive federal funds. Under this law, schools and state education agencies typically must have student or parental authorization to disclose student records, but FERPA also defines exceptions to this general rule.

For example, FERPA authorizes the U.S. Comptroller General and state educational authorities to access student records “in connection with the audit or evaluation of federally-supported education programs.” The U.S. Department of Education administers FERPA, and its website has a 1999 document that says that state auditors may be considered authorized representatives of state and local education authorities for purposes of auditing and evaluating federal- or state-supported education programs.

But a 2003 memo from the department said that an authorized representative of a state educational authority “must be under the direct control of that authority, e.g., an employee or contractor of the authority.” Such an interpretation would seem to disallow access to student records by independent audit or evaluation agencies.

We contacted the U.S. Department of Education for clarification. A department official told us that her department has “waffled” in its views about state auditor access under FERPA, and she said that the department needs to issue a definitive opinion on this subject.

Agencies’ Interpretations of FERPA Requirements

Meanwhile, various attorneys for the Minnesota higher education organizations from which we requested data were busily offering their own interpretations of FERPA requirements. For example, an attorney for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system noted that FERPA authorizes disclosure of data for studies conducted “for or on behalf of educational institutions”—thus, in her opinion, a legislatively-directed study would not meet this requirement. This attorney drafted an agreement between MnSCU and our office that asserted that our tuition reciprocity study was being conducted “for or on behalf of MnSCU.” But this assertion was untrue, and we did not sign the agreement.

We reminded the attorneys that our office has regularly conducted financial audits of student financial aid, which requires access to individual student records. Thus, questions raised about our office’s access to student data might have implications beyond the tuition reciprocity study. We knew—as did representatives of the higher education systems—that legislators would not welcome diminished external oversight of the state’s public higher education systems.

Eventually, our office agreed to enter into more palatable interagency agreements with MnSCU, the University of Minnesota, and the Minnesota Higher Education Services Office. We did this with considerable reluctance, given that we believe that our office is authorized by law, not by agreements, to obtain student data. We ultimately
concluded, however, that the interagency agreements (1) contained stipulations that were consistent with our usual practices regarding data access and use, and (2) would prevent further delays in getting the data. We agreed that personal identifiers would not be publicly disclosed and that data would be destroyed when no longer needed for the purposes for which the study was conducted.

Overall, it’s likely that the statutory protections on individual student records will sometimes make life more complicated for program evaluation and audit offices. But when there are challenges to our access to student data, I hope that our offices will not simply acquiesce. Education programs comprise a large part of state budgets, and sometimes we need to see individual records to properly oversee these programs. There should be reasonable exemptions to FERPA that allow for external review by auditors and evaluators, while protecting student records from public disclosure.

**Small Shop Talk**

**Touch of the Magic Wand**

*Margaret Campbell (Idaho Office of Performance Evaluations)*

Sitting on my desk, in a clay cup made by my daughter, is a wand. It’s made from clear acrylic with stars and glitter inside, and like an hourglass, the stars and glitter float downward when you turn it over. My husband gave it to me for entertainment and relaxation, but our director refers to it as a magic wand. Many times, particularly when publishing reports, magic is what I need!

In a small shop, staff take on several different roles—many at the same time. I am the administrative assistant in an office of eight full-time employees. My roles include fiscal officer, human resource officer, training coordinator, travel coordinator, facilities manager, computer and equipment troubleshooter, desktop publisher, webmaster, editor, receptionist, assistant to the director, and secretary to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee. Normally these roles are manageable, except when I’m “desktop publishing” a report. Report publishing is all consuming, and juggling anything else is challenging.

Our report release last spring is a good example of what I mean. Our oversight committee asked for a report on revenues and expenditures of 114 public school districts. Staff had five weeks to complete the task before session ended. A few days before the first and only draft went to the Department of Education, evaluators gave me 60 tables and graphs to format. In my most professional way, I panicked!

If evaluators are pressed for time, the desktop publisher will also be pressed for time. In fact, when deadlines are extended to allow for more writing/editing time, the desktop publisher makes up much of the time difference. In the case of this report, I was afraid that there was not enough time to format a professional, error-free report and get it to the printer before our committee meeting—even if technology cooperated. But I underestimated how much could be accomplished in the evening hours when there are no phone or staff interruptions, and I was able to meet the deadlines. Since I’m not advocating late evenings in the office, I offer the following five tips for making the final report processing a better experience.

1. **There is nothing to fear but fear itself...and unrealistic deadlines.** My daughter tells me that fear is False Expectations Appearing Real. In addition to time constraints, I fear losing sanity during the pandemonium of getting the report out the door—which may or may not be a false expectation. In any case, staff should expect to see the desktop publisher working intently and perhaps acting less “normal” than usual.

2. **Desktop publisher should only be interrupted in cases of nuclear attack—everything else can wait.** The job gets done more quickly and with fewer errors when the desktop publisher has blocks of uninterrupted time to concentrate. Although the desktop publisher may be willing to be interrupted for something less than a nuclear catastrophe, staff should attempt to prioritize their issues and interrupt only when an issue may affect the publishing or is an imminent time deadline. Other concerns can be e-mailed or brought to the publisher's attention when he/she has taken a much-needed break from the computer.
3. **Evaluators should write edits clearly or expect visits from a deranged desktop publisher.** As evaluators make edits to the final draft, have a designated person review all suggestions and combine the edits into one copy for the desktop publisher. This saves the desktop publisher from leaving his/her desk for clarification when a particular sentence has been edited several ways. This process also keeps interruptions to a minimum (see Tip 2).

Clear proofreader marks and legible edits with a color pen are critical to efficient revisions. Evaluators may be able to read their own writing and know the meaning of arrows all over the page, but it is not necessarily clear to a cold reader. Under normal conditions, I read the sentences I’m editing for logical sense. But when time pressures mount, I forgo reading and type what I see—which may not be correct. Also, when there are just a few edits across many pages, it is almost impossible to quickly spot edits made with pencil.

4. **The director needs to conduct mini pep rallies.**
No matter how much the desktop publisher anticipates and prepares for smooth publishing of the report, he/she doesn’t have control over how much time it will take to get the report into a final format. It helps when the director provides encouragement and appreciation. The long hours and missed deadlines are not necessarily anyone’s fault, but often a part of producing a quality report.

5. **See the team lead if you don’t receive your paycheck.** My biggest challenge has been balancing routine responsibilities during desktop publishing. I have recurring nightmares that I will forget to submit payroll during the most hectic times. I appreciate a team lead who takes responsibility for monitoring report deadlines and communicating to me in advance of anticipated work. When this part of the report process is managed well, the desktop publisher can focus his/her resources to meet publishing deadlines, as well as many other administrative deadlines—including payroll.

When I started in this position, I had four teenagers at home and was used to pandemonium. Over time, the kids matured—one even moved out—and my home life settled down. The same has been true for desktop publishing. Teamwork, experience, and recognition of the team’s strengths and weaknesses all move the last phase of the report process along more efficiently. And, when all else fails…I tiptoe around the office waving my wand, just in case it is magic.

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### Liaison’s Corner

**Sister NCSL Staff Sections**

The internal structure of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) can be confusing even to those of us who have attended several NCSL Annual Meetings. NLPES is one of ten staff sections within NCSL, each of which is an association of legislative staff that serve in similar capacities across the country. Our own Max Arinder is the current NCSL Staff Chair who, among other duties, is responsible for representing these various groups before the NCSL Executive Committee.

This article highlights two other NCSL staff sections whose members you may interact with during the course of your work: the Legislative Research Librarians (LRL) and the National Association of Legislative Fiscal Offices (NALFO).

LRL is composed primarily of librarians and information specialists in legislative agencies. It was established to promote effective information retrieval techniques for legislative libraries; to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas relating to legislative information, operations, and procedures in the states; and to enhance the professionalism of its members. Like other staff sections, it sponsors various programs at the NCSL Annual Meeting and holds an Annual Professional Development Seminar, scheduled this year in Portland, Oregon.

As you might expect from an association of research librarians, their website (accessible through NCSL) has links to several free and inexpensive sources for news and policy information, such as the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services’ *Health Care Financing Review* and the *Health Affairs*, a bimonthly, peer-reviewed journal on health policy and managed care. NLPES is exploring the possibility of co-hosting a joint NLPES/LRL Fall Training Conference in Tallahassee, Florida in 2004, in part as a way of sharing some of the “nonprogrammatic” costs of the conference.

NALFO is open to all legislative staff involved in fiscal research and analysis. Historically, NALFO has had strong regional roots and is still structured into two regional sections, Western and Eastern, each of which meets during the fall. In addition, NALFO provides training for new fiscal office personnel and sponsors the
Senior Fiscal Analysts Seminar in late summer or early fall. Many of the topics covered in the Seminar would also be of interest to NLPES members, so if the Seminar is being held in your area (the dates and locations have not yet been finalized for 2004) you may want to check it out. NALFO members also contribute to a monthly NCSL webpage called *The Fiscal Link* which can be accessed through the NCSL website.

**State Profile**

**North Carolina Fiscal Research Division**

**Year established**—The Fiscal Research Division of the North Carolina General Assembly was established by statute in 1971.

**Organizational Placement**—North Carolina is a state that uses a central staffing model with all of the Legislative Services divisions (Fiscal Research, Bill Drafting, Research, Information Systems, and Administrative Services) serving as a nonpartisan staff to both houses of the legislature. The North Carolina General Assembly is composed of 50 senators and 120 house members. Providing service to 170 members, plus their legislative assistants and the leadership offices, makes for interesting days and nights. To make it more interesting, North Carolina has no constitutional limit on sessions and in 2003, the House of Representatives elected co-speakers for the first time in the state's history.

**Division's Responsibilities**—The statute that established the Fiscal Research Division gives it the broad responsibilities of:

- Analyzing past expenditures and current budget recommendations of state departments
- Reviewing and evaluating agency compliance with legislative directions
- Examining the structure and organization of state departments
- Conducting studies at the direction of the General Assembly
- Reporting on study results to the General Assembly

**Organizational Structure**—The organizational structure that supports this effort is a group of nine teams, organized around the structure of the Appropriations Committee and the Finance Committee. The Division has a total of 35 full-time staff. Teams vary in size from two to five analysts, and part-time research assistants are utilized at various times during the year. Research assistants are typically second year graduate students from local universities. A support team of three makes sure the office runs efficiently and that member and public requests get to the appropriate teams.

“Off Season” Activities—Over the past four years, North Carolina has broken several records for the length of our legislative sessions, so it was a notable achievement when the General Assembly adjourned in 2003 before the end of July. This meant that staff members and their families were able to enjoy extended summer vacations for the first time in over five years. Interim months bring many challenges. Staffing interim commissions and work studies, site visits, speaking engagements, seminars and workshops, along with preparing work plans for the coming session are a few of the things that consume the staff's time in addition to the ongoing requests from members and the public.

**Recent Challenges**—Currently, North Carolina is experiencing what most other state governments are with high unemployment, budget deficits, deployment of military troops and increased security costs. In addition, North Carolina has endured a series of hurricanes over the last few years that have severely damaged central, eastern and coastal North Carolina. The most current devastation was the arrival of Hurricane Isabel. These events have allowed the legislative staff few dull moments over the past five years.

**Looking Forward to the Future**—The General Assembly reconvenes in May 2004 and will be focusing on long-term projects, the latest hurricane and continued problems in agency budgets with the worst economy in over 50 years. The Fiscal Research will be there too.
Are We Ready for the Brain Drain?

Jim Pelligrini  *(Montana Legislative Audit Division)*

In the 1970’s, state governments witnessed the growth of audit and evaluation functions. Legislators wanted to know how the money was being spent. We were happy to tell them. They wanted more. We were happy to serve. We grew in size and knowledge.

With our pencils and paper we went forward to slay the dragon. However, “a dragon lives forever, but not so little boys. Painted wings and giant’s rings make way for other toys. One gray night it happened, Jackie Paper came no more and Puff that Mighty Dragon, he ceased his fearless roar.”

We don’t live in the land of Honalee, but the dragon still lives. And Jackie is looking for other toys in retirement. Can we be brave without Jackie? Will it be a gray night when Jackie comes to work no more?

Retirements have and are going to impact the future of evaluation. Retirements are a double-edged sword. The “brain drain” is a factor that must be dealt with. But, retirements also allow room for new ideas and new approaches.

Knowledge loss, often an unintended consequence of retirements, is going to be one of the costliest problems confronting our organizations. We shouldn’t be in a position of ignoring the risk of lost knowledge until the damage is done.

A recent study of 26 companies and organizations identifies the consequences of “brain drain”—which include reduced efficiency and costly errors, as well as lack of innovation. The study stresses the importance of employing better work force planning and developing knowledge-retention initiatives. It identifies three major considerations.

**Timing:** When is retirement coming? This is often a tough question. The person retiring may not have a firm date for retirement. They may “retire” before retiring. All of that aside—one needs to determine how soon will the knowledge be lost. Days? Months? Years? Determine how much time you have to identify which employees have jobs for which no backups or replacements had been trained, especially those with internal and external connections. The key is to capture that knowledge before those employees leave.

**Type of knowledge:** As we know from our evaluation work, knowledge is either easily documented, or is not. The first kind is simpler to deal with; the second is more difficult. The design of our plans to retain this knowledge depends on the type of knowledge being transferred.

**Setting:** Practices for retaining knowledge may be applied broadly or narrowly, depending on how the organization views the problem of brain drain.

Seven factors make up a framework for successful knowledge retention:

1. **Identify knowledge at risk.** Which employees have the most critical knowledge? Do some self-assessment and determine those areas and skills vital to a successful work product. Is the organization in danger of losing critical skills? What a person knows and the associated skills are the primary sources of an individual’s value to an organization. Determine what they are.

2. **Implement career development and succession planning.** A career development program builds knowledge that our offices need to prepare for future roles.

3. **Use knowledge transfer practices.** The type of knowledge involved determines the practice used. Cultural knowledge needs to be transferred through face-to-face interaction. But practical, rule-based knowledge doesn’t need face-to-face interaction and can be transferred through training programs or technology.

4. **Use information technology to improve access to practical knowledge.** Develop a system that nurtures a sharing of information. Make information available to all who need it.

5. **Phased retirements.** If the knowledge-retention problem becomes acute, develop ways to extend the tenure of the most valuable employees. Work with the employees to phase in their retirements so that the other factors listed previously can be implemented.

6. **Effectively use retirees.** A growing number of organizations are becoming dependent on retirees as contractors or consultants. Many groups leave such arrangements to the discretion of individual managers. But a few have created formal programs to actually encourage the part-time reemployment of retirees. At the same time you should be developing a system for the future sharing of information so that contracting-back does not become commonplace.
7. **Build a retention culture.** Organizations trying to retain knowledge must create a culture that makes knowledge “capture,” sharing and reuse an everyday practice. This is a tricky one. Self-assessment of the values and norms of the organization must be undertaken. If people feel they will only survive by hoarding knowledge, they won’t share it or develop systems to share it. Among the values most important to supporting a knowledge-retention culture are shared senses of trust and commitment. Organizations that have addressed the problem of knowledge retention have found culture to be the most important area—and the one most difficult to change.

The other side of the sword brings fresh ideas and new approaches. Along with the fresh ideas come new challenges. As the workforce shrinks, states are realizing that the future workforce will be different. The labor pool in the next five to ten years will become increasingly more diverse. The workforce may be more educated, but not necessarily trained for a specific job. With these factors in mind, states need to recognize that there will be competition for the smaller pool of qualified workers. The need for innovative approaches to recruit and retrain new workers is necessary. But that is another topic.

And, for those 70’s kids: “His head was bent in sorrow, green scales fell like rain, Puff no longer went to play along the cherry lane. Without his life-long friend, Puff could not be brave so Puff that Mighty Dragon sadly slipped into his cave. Puff the Magic Dragon lived by the sea and frolicked in the autumn mist in a land called Honalee.”

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**FOR ALL YOU LOVERS OF WORDS**

A bicycle can’t stand alone because it is two-tired.

A chicken crossing the road is poultry in motion.

Show me a piano falling down a mine shaft and I’ll show you A-flat minor.

When a clock is hungry it goes back four seconds.

The man who fell into an upholstery machine is fully recovered.

A grenade thrown into a kitchen in France would result in Linoleum Blownapart.

Local Area Network in Australia: the LAN down under.

Every calendar’s days are numbered.

A lot of money is tainted. ’Taint yours and ‘taint mine.

A boiled egg in the morning is hard to beat.

He had a photographic memory that was never developed.

Those who get too big for their britches will be exposed in the end.

Those who jump off a Paris bridge are in Seine.

When an actress saw her first strands of gray hair she thought she’d dye.

Santa’s helpers are subordinate clauses.

Acupuncture is a jab well done.

Marathon runners with bad footwear suffer the agony of defeat.
A Normative Definition of the Role of a State Auditor

Dr. Mordecai Lee (Associate Professor, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee)

Editor's Note

The March 1985 issue of the LPES Report (the forerunner of the NLPES News) included a series of articles entitled “After the Report, Then What? The Role of Report Advocacy.” The four articles in the series explored the continuum of advocacy involvement of state evaluation/audit units. Wisconsin state Senator Mordecai Lee (who has since left the legislature) authored one of the articles and discussed the professional status and philosophy of legislative authors. At the time he authored his article, Senator Lee served as the Senate Vice-Chair of the Wisconsin Joint Legislative Committee. Dr. Lee is presently an Associate Professor of Governmental Affairs at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

The Spring/Summer issue of the NLPES News included Dr. Lee’s article as it appeared in 1985. Dr. Lee graciously reviewed his 1985 article and wrote an epilogue, as follows.

Dr. Lee’s Thoughts on His 1985 Article

It's an odd sensation being confronted with one's own ideas published nearly 20 years ago. (Although, it's probably better than being an over-the-hill Hollywood star forced to re-view movies made in one's prime.) When NLPES editor James Barber contacted me about his desire to rerun my 1985 piece, he asked me if I had any further thoughts on the topic. Certainly, it was flattering to think that perhaps something written 18 years ago might still have some relevance almost two decades later. I do have some follow-up thoughts, although that's no guarantee that I've fulfilled Mr. Barber's request for something new...

From Legislator to University Professor

First, a personal note to explain my changed perspective, since 'where you stand depends on where you sit.' At the time I wrote the 1985 piece, I was a junior member of Wisconsin's Joint Audit Committee, first on the Assembly side and then on the Senate side. In January 1987, at the beginning of the Legislature's new session, as a member of the majority party I was appointed Senate Co-Chair of the Committee. I continued serving in that position until late 1989, when I voluntarily resigned from the Legislature and left elected politics. (Lots of reasons, but that's a different story.) Then, for seven years, I was the executive director of a nonprofit agency that engaged in advocacy, lobbying and community relations regarding a broad spectrum of public policy issues. I occasionally testified at legislative hearings, lobbied and had numerous conversations with elected officials at all levels of government. I also functioned as a media spokesperson for my agency, as well as – for lack of a better term – 'pundit-at-large' to the news media seeking comments on a wide variety of public policy issues.

Since 1997 I've been on the faculty at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in governmental affairs and was awarded tenure last year. One of the subjects I teach is policy analysis to candidates for a Master's of Public Administration (MPA). Several of my students have been hired by government auditing agencies, including the Wisconsin's Legislative Audit Bureau. As part of my service as a professor, I’ve occasionally been invited to provide training, talks or consulting to government agencies at all levels, including—again—the state's Legislative Audit Bureau. Every once in a while, I talk with the State Auditor and volunteer my commiseration about the political environment she sometimes finds herself in. She and the Milwaukee County Auditor (who also works for the legislative branch of his level of government) invited me to be the keynote speaker at the Midwest Intergovernmental Audit Forum (MIAF) in 2000. I've also become a permanent panelist on a weekly TV public affairs show, aired on the local CBS network affiliate, hosted by a leading talk radio personality. As you can imagine, we frequently talk about government on the air including some of the audits released by the State Auditor’s shop.

So, (sorry for the long windup) since writing the piece, I've chaired a legislative auditing oversight committee, viewed auditing from afar as a citizen/lobbyist, interacted with auditors as professor of government and commented on controversial audits on TV. These varied experiences have been invaluable in forming my current views on legislative auditing. It was in that context that I re-read my 1985 piece. Now, being given a chance by Mr. Barber, I can express any arguments I have with my 1985 self. Given this opportunity, what would I change? Absolutely nothing. No. Strike that. I'd want to make the case even more strongly than I did in 1985, if that's possible. Why?
**Pessimism About American Politics**

I have to start with my pessimism about the changes in American politics since I left elected office (what seems like) so long ago. Comparing circa 1985 politics with that in the first decade of the 21st century is akin to comparing the Jurassic Age with the Digital Age. Certainly, the changes in technology, demographic trends and other developments have contributed to this. But, I'd wave all that aside and instead focus exclusively on the two crucial trends that legislative auditing is affected by: the changed nature of American electoral politics and changes in the news media.

(I'm about to express some personal opinions and make some sweeping generalizations. I'll also be describing things in a somewhat overstated way to make my case — hey, author's prerogative! But, as should be expected, and deservedly so, some readers will disagree with my general thesis. Others will feel that even if my generalizations are 'sorta' right, I'm factually wrong about their particular situation and therefore my comments are inapplicable to them. So, a pre-emptive mea culpa.)

**American Politics Has Undergone a Revolution**

From my perch on the ivory tower, it seems to me that the culture of American politics has undergone a revolution since 1985. The best analogy I can think of is that politics has shifted from a ma & pa activity to big business. It's become professionalized, meaner, tougher, more partisan, more serious (in a political sense, not a policy sense) and seemingly has more at stake. Opponents have become enemies, even the devil incarnate. Policy disagreements have become exchanges of bumper sticker slogans, not substantive discussions. Compromise has become a bad thing, to be sneered at. Politics has overwhelmed policy. Campaigns are now permanent. Solutions are less important than partisan advantage. 'Taking it to the people' has become the modus operandi for every issue, big or small, rather than one or two major ones. The more inflammatory the controversy can be packaged as, the better. Ideology has rigidified, pragmatism sneered at. Governing doesn't occur much any more, it's always trumped by political considerations. Any day's issues — whenever that occurs in the calendar — is treated with a fierceness as though it's just the day before the next election.

**Affect of Campaign Financing on Politics**

But, all these developments are minor (sic!) compared to what's happened to campaign financing and its ripple effect on politics. Fundraising doesn't stop because one just won an election. (To give you a sense of my disconnect with contemporary politics, when I was first elected to the State Senate in 1982, I abolished my campaign committee. After all, I thought to myself, the soonest I'd be needing it again was at least three and a half years away…) American politics is currently trapped in a closed loop. It takes more and more money to win elections. Therefore, legislators need to raise more money for their campaigns. Where can they raise it? From individuals and associations of like-minded people with a stake in the decisions legislators make, commonly known as special interest groups. To be the recipient of campaign contributions from such groups, the legislator has to be sure to have taken positions and cast votes in the manner approved of by these groups. But the amount of money the legislator spent as a candidate last time is inadequate for the next election after that. So, more money needs to be raised. As Yul Brynner said in The King and I (I'm probably dating myself here): "Etc., Etc., etc."

It's like what we were told in high school history (if we were one of the few who weren't bored by it) about the arms race between Great Britain and Germany in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. If one country had a new armament like a dreadnought, the other country had to at least match it, preferably top it. Then the other country…, ad nauseam. The military budget of those countries kept consuming more and more of the gross domestic product and yet the two countries were no safer than before the arms race had begun.

When I was elected to the state senate in the early 1980s, I spent $30,000 — a huge sum in relation to Wisconsin politics at the time. Last year, we saw individual campaigns (and related supportive independent spending) coming in over $500,000 per side. That increase certainly can't be explained away by inflation!

**Trends in the News Media**

Parallel to that, I'm discouraged by the trends in the news media. In this case, I'm not referring to paid media, such as advertising on TV by candidates. That belongs in the preceding discussion. Rather, I'm suggesting that the definition of news has changed dramatically since 1985. Back then (gee, I must sound like an old codger — I'm only 54!), newspapers, television and radio generally performed what would be called their constitutional role. In other words, the US constitution grants freedom of the press to the news media for a reason. The rationale for it was the newspapers would close the loop of democratic accountability. They would provide the public with independent information about the performance and views of their elected officials. Only then could the voters develop judgments about whether a politician deserved reelection or not. This role for the
press was viewed by the writers of the Bill of Rights in the very first Congress convened under the new Constitution as the essential prerequisite to an informed citizenry, the sine qua non of democracy. Bluntly, no free press – no democracy.

(By the way, Jefferson didn't see things quite the same way. He presented James Madison with a draft that worded the press's privileges verrrrrry differently:

The people shall not be deprived or abridged of their right to speak[1] to write or otherwise to publish anything but false facts affecting injuriously the life, liberty, property, or reputation of others or affecting the peace of the confederacy with foreign nations.

Try to imagine American journalism and politics if Madison had deferred to Jefferson's draft! OK, end of my history lecture.)

So, news media coverage into the early 1980's conformed to these constitutionally-derived news practices that had existed since the emergence of modern newspapers. The new medium of radio maintained the paradigm. Radio news was essentially an aural newspaper. Ditto for early television news. It was the visual version of the daily paper. Coverage focused primarily on the public sector: What's happening in City Hall? What did the State Legislature vote on yesterday? etc. Government news was the equivalent of news. That's exactly what the Constitution envisioned.

**Business Side v. Reporting Side**

Then, for some reason (I'm not sure why – theories welcome), the business side of the news media began trumping the reporting side. The profit making imperative become more important than the constitutional one. Making money – or, rather, making more money – eclipsed the traditions of covering government. Why? Because public sector news was boring! It was driving away one's market share. Nothing was deadlier than a quote or sound bite of a colorless legislator droning on about the latest incremental and miniscule development regarding some obscure public policy issue. If a newspaper, radio station or TV station wanted to stay in the black financially it had to have a larger audience. To have a larger audience it had to present a product that was exciting, gripping, astounding, even tear-generating. "Throw out the politicians, give me some victims," one can practically hear consultants and editors shouting. It was now a time to entertain rather than inform. So, legislative news gradually disappeared from news coverage. Legislators went from important local influencers to anonymous nobodies.

If there was any political coverage – such as in the aftermath of 9/11 – it followed the new paradigm of reporting, namely stories that glued the audience to the screen (or radio or paper), so powerful as to prevent the archetypical American male from flipping channels. Public policy coverage descended into exchanges of bumper sticker slogans. And the more extreme and hyperbolic, the better. There was a synergistic relationship between the shift in political rhetoric (discussed above) and the needs of contemporary news media. 'Red meat' and inflammatory accusations were the only things politicians and reporters were attracted to. Similarly, coverage of anything-but-substance is the rule of the day. Long distance phone calls from a legislator's office? Now there's a juicy story. A campaign financing reform bill – brrrrrrrrrrr! So, the changes in the definition of news have created another closed loop in contemporary public affairs. When was the last time you saw coverage of an in-the-middle moderate legislator carefully explaining a highly nuanced position with a dozen caveats that could be used to negotiate a compromise? We've certainly hit bottom when the major source of news about the federal government for the average American is the opening monolog on Letterman and Leno.

**Public Interest Has Disappeared**

What, pray tell, could this jeremiad about politics and the media possibly have to do with legislative auditing? Just one thing: the public interest has disappeared as a force in legislative decision-making and public affairs. Based on the trends I described, neither politicians nor reporters see any payoff in focusing on the public interest. It carries no weight within politics and is boring to the news media.

So, now more than in 1985, I see the role of the legislative auditor as the only potential institutionalized voice for the public interest. This voice needs to be heard 'in-house,' within the political system as well as in the larger arena of civil society, which theoretically is where the news media would be expected to be a major contributor. The legislative auditor cum public intervenor is needed to advance the broad interests of the public-at-large in the policy process. First, the auditor fills the gap now existing in government caused by elected officials' obsessive preoccupation with fundraising and survival. Second, the auditor needs to take steps of not only voicing these broad societal considerations within the legislative halls, but equally needs to fill the gap caused by the media's abandonment of the needs of a democratic society. In that latter sense, the legislative auditor becomes a teacher-at-large for external public discussion of major policy issues –
whether with the help of the media or without it if necessary.

Re-reading my 1985 piece, I'm struck by one important detail that by itself symbolizes the deterioration in government that I've been trying to describe and analyze: the position of environmental Public Intervenor that I had highlighted as an existing model worth emulating nationally by legislative auditors was abolished in Wisconsin. To me, that dramatically symbolizes how far we've fallen, certainly in my state. (Please accept that I'm not trying to make a partisan or ideological point here. That's why I'm specifically omitting any information about the political conditions that led to this development.) So now, nearly 20 years later, the very model that I was holding up as a normative goal for legislative auditors has become merely a theoretical concept in my state rather than a real one.

Public Intervenor Role for Auditors

Nonetheless, I remain idealistic that the normative goal for legislative auditors should be akin to a public intervenor. Looking back over the 1985 article, I noticed the absence of one word that I hadn't used; yet one that captures everything I was trying to convey. That word is activist. ('Proactive' is one of those empty clichés of contemporary rhetoric I forbid in my classes, along with 'resources,' 'community,' and 'challenges.'.) The role of my proposed ideal-type independent auditor is that of an activist participant in the public policy process. This has many meanings. In the narrowest sense, it means that the auditor should have the power to initiate audits that are— in the opinion of the auditor—needed. The political process has a very powerful invisible dynamic of not 'seeing' certain things, certainly not requesting audits on politically delicate topics.

Yet, being an activist legislative auditor should, I'd suggest, be construed much more broadly. Auditors should have the power to draft and introduce bills s/he thinks are necessary. All bills being considered in the Legislature should require an auditor's note, just like most bills require some version of a fiscal impact note. Auditors should feel free to send 'Dear Legislator' letters to all the members of the body at will. For example, the auditor should routinely send open letters to legislators when they are in the midst of debating a bill, calling their attention to important sections— whether laudable or objectionable. The auditor should have the option to testify at any hearing on any bill proposal— and should exercise that option without restraint. Similarly, s/he should have the power to draft and introduce amendments to bills to eliminate odious provisions. Finally, every legislative auditor should have a full-time and experienced press secretary to help make the auditor into a major news figure. With the assistance of the news aide, the auditor should be available for interviews, always ready to explain his/her positions on issues, should issue statements when necessary and even should initiate contacts with reporters and editors to suggest ideas for news coverage as needed. The standard phrase so often found in news coverage, "The Auditor declined to comment" should atrophy from lack of use.

Yes, this makes the auditor a politician who is active in the public policy process, no different than all the other players. But, there actually would be one important difference. The auditor would be the institutionalized voice of the public interest. Certainly, as a player, the auditor will win some and lose some. S/he will antagonize some powerful legislators and influential interests. But, no matter what happens, the citizenry would have the ironclad confidence that the perspective of the public interest would never be absent in state government and legislative deliberations.

Legislative Auditor Should be the Public Interest

So, yes, nearly 20 years later, I simply renew, without any significant modification, my proposal for a normative model of legislative auditors as active and independent participants in state government. The (quixotic) goal I'm restating is that the legislative auditor should be the public interest. Citizens seeking to fulfill their own democratic duties could rest easier knowing that there is a voice for the public interest at their capital city who is not asleep at the legislative switch.

P.S. My apologies on the length of the epilog. I've become a typically prolix professor. It took me more than three times as many words to restate what I had written when I was a legislator! At least that might help debunk the stereotype of the verbose politician...

Abe Lincoln on Report Writing

A report having much useless language lay on his desk, the work of a Congressional committee regarding a newly devised gun. "I should want a new lease of life to read this through," groaned the President. "Why can't an investigating committee show a grain of common sense? If I send a man to buy a horse for me, I expect him to tell me that horse's points—not how many hairs he has in his tail."
Office Happenings

Kansas

Molly Coplen, Associate Auditor, joined the Legislative Post Audit in 2003 after working for the University of Kansas for seven years. She has a bachelor's degree in business and a master's degree in professional accountancy. Molly is also a certified internal auditor.

Amy Thompson, Associate Auditor, joined the Division in 2003. She received both a bachelor's degree in business administration and a master's of accountancy from Kansas State University.

Ivan Williams, Associate Auditor, joined Legislative Post Audit in 2003 after working more than ten years in healthcare, most recently as a quality improvement coordinator. A native of Nickerson, he has a bachelor's degree in psychology from Louisiana Tech University and a master's in business administration degree from Wichita State.

Michigan

Best wishes to Gary Brown (former NLPES Executive Committee member) as he retires effective November 1, 2003, with almost thirty-two years of service.

The Auditor General announced the appointment of Laura Hirst, Melissa Schuiling, Gerry Schwandt, and Elden Lamb to the positions of Audit Manager. Recent hires include Corrie Perrin, Lori Wackerle and Dawn Anderson. Recent resignations include Michael Amspaugh, Mary Martin, Amy McGreaham, Jennifer Lopez, and Jill Treplkoski.

Mississippi

The Joint Legislative Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review Committee has recently hired John Pearce and Brad Rowland as evaluators. Lee Anne Robinson resigned from the PEER staff to accept a position with the Joint Legislative Budget Committee. Katherine Landrum, a veteran PEER employee, recently resigned to accept a position with Millsaps College.

North Carolina

Jim Newlin will be retiring from the North Carolina General Assembly's Fiscal Research Division on October 31, 2003. Jim has been an analyst with the Division for over 28 years. He has worked primarily on the Education Team but has also served on the Transportation, General Government, Finance and Natural and Economic Resources teams. Jim grew up in Burlington, North Carolina and graduated from UNC-Chapel Hill. After retirement, Jim plans to explore second career opportunities and the possibility of building a cabin on his land along the Blue Ridge Parkway in Virginia. He also hopes to spend more time with his son, Nathan, a senior in high school and with his mother, Elizabeth Newlin, who resides in Burlington. Time permitting, Jim might also travel to the coast to visit several of his five nieces.

During his career, Jim Newlin has been a mainstay in the Fiscal Research Division. His knowledge and experience have been invaluable to his coworkers, members of the General Assembly, and numerous state and local government officials and agencies. Jim may be leaving state government service but his contributions will remain long after he is gone. Although we will miss him, we wish him much happiness and the very best in his future endeavors.

Texas Sunset Advisory Commission

The Texas Sunset Advisory Commission regrets to report the passing of Vanessa Gonzalez. Vanessa was a policy analyst for Sunset for the past four years. NLPES members probably met her at the fall conference held in Austin where, as usual, she was volunteering in many ways, including hosting one of the optional field trips. She leaves behind a husband and infant daughter, as well as many saddened friends and colleagues. She also leaves behind a legacy of improving Texas government. We will all miss her.

West Virginia

Michael Midkiff and Denny Rhodes have been promoted as managers for the Performance Evaluation and Research Division. In addition, Paul Barnette and Russell Kitchen has been promoted to Senior Analysts. Recent resignations include Susannah Carpenter and David Mullins.

Announcements

Nancy Van Maren (former director of the Idaho Office of Performance Evaluations) recently gave birth to Christian Paul Fink on July 10. Christian was 23 inches long and weighed 10 pounds and 5 ounces. Heather Moritz (former NLPES Executive Committee chair) resigned her position with the Colorado State Auditor's Office. Heather will be furthering her education in Australia in the near future. Rakesh Mohan (director of the Idaho Office of Performance Evaluations) has recently been appointed by the Comptroller General to a three-year term on the Advisory Council on Government Auditing Standards.
More From San Francisco

NLPES Executive Committee

(L to R) Wade Melton, Manu Patel, Phil Durgin, Heather Moritz, Tim Osterstock, Kate Wade, Ken Levine, Sherry Hayashi, Martha Carter, and Steve Hendrickson (Not pictured: Joe Lawhorn)

Photo Credit: David Summers, Florida OPPAGA
NLPES Executive Committee

According to its bylaws, an Executive Committee composed of eleven elected members and the immediate past chair manage the affairs of NLPES. Elected members serve for a period of two years and are eligible for re-election. The Executive Committee meets at least three times each year to discuss matters of interest to the Society. The following individuals comprise the NLPES Executive Committee for the 2003-2004 term.

Kate Wade (Chair) Program Evaluation Director, Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau

Martha Carter (Vice-Chair) Program Evaluation Analyst, Nebraska Program Evaluation Unit

Phil Durgin (Secretary), Executive Director, Pennsylvania Legislative Budget and Finance Committee

Joel Alter, Program Evaluation Coordinator, Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor

Steve Hendrickson, Chief Deputy, California Bureau of State Audits

Joe Lawhorn, Principal Auditor, Kansas Legislative Division of Post Audit

Ken Levine, Assistant Director, Texas Sunset Advisory Commission

Wade Melton, Staff Director, Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability

Tim Osterstock, Audit Manager, Utah Office of the Legislative Auditor General

Manu Patel, Performance Audit Manager, New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee

NOTE: Due to Sherry Hayashi’s recent resignation, there is one vacancy on the Executive Committee.

From the Editor

As I said in last month’s issue, the NLPES News continues to be a work in progress. I trust that each issue contains information that will assist you in being a better and more effective legislative evaluator or auditor. The work that we do provides valuable support to our respective legislatures as they make important policy decisions.

The Winter 2004 issue of the NLPES News will include a recap of the fall training conference co-hosted by NLPES and the Michigan Office of the Auditor General. From all reports, the conference was both informative and entertaining. Hats off to Gary Brown and his Michigan colleagues for their tireless efforts in planning the conference and related events.

I continue to be indebted to all of you who “willingly” agree to write articles for the newsletter. I certainly could not produce this newsletter without your help. Thanks also to Bob Boerner, the NCSL liaison to NLPES, for his efforts in “troubleshooting” any item that I send his way.

James Barber

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- To promote the art and science of legislative program evaluation.
- To enhance professionalism and training in legislative program evaluation.
- To promote the exchange of ideas and information about legislative program evaluation.

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