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Legislative Podcasts

In May 2021, NCSL was asked to gather information regarding podcasts in legislatures. Some states did not respond to the survey but have podcasts; their links are listed below. NCSL surveyed LINCS members and below are the questions and responses received:

- Does your legislature/caucus/chamber produce a podcast?
- If yes, please share the following:
 - a. Name of podcast
 - b. Link to podcast
 - c. The year the podcast was started
 - d. Frequency of episodes (i.e. – new episode every month, etc.)
 - e. Number of total episodes since inception
- What resources (both time and money) are devoted to the podcast?
 - a. How many staff support the production of the podcast?
 - b. How many hours of staff time are devoted towards planning and executing one episode?
 - c. What were the start-up costs (i.e. – costs to purchasing equipment)?
- Do you track metrics, specifically the number of listeners or downloads?
- If yes, please share more?
- Can you share any advice, or words of wisdom, about producing a podcast?

States that did not respond to the inquiry but have podcasts are below:

Indiana Senate Republican Caucus – [The Senate Minute](#)

Washington State Senate Republican Caucus – [The Elephant in the Dome](#)

Washington Senate Democratic Caucus – [The Everblue State](#)

Wisconsin Assembly Majority – [The Right Angle](#)

California Assembly Democratic Communication and Outreach Office

- Does your legislature/caucus/chamber produce a podcast?
 - a. **Yes**
- If yes, please share the following:
 - a. Name of podcast: **Look West**
 - b. Link to podcast: **You can find us on [Spotify](#), [Apple Podcasts](#), [YouTube](#), and [Google](#)**
 - c. The year the podcast was started: **2018**
 - d. Frequency of episodes (i.e. – new episode every month, etc.): **bi-weekly**
 - e. Number of total episodes since inception: **62**
- What resources (both time and money) are devoted to the podcast?
 - f. How many staff support the production of the podcast? **10 – 12 people. Two Audio Techs, two marketing/promo folks, 6 – 8 producers.**
 - g. How many hours of staff time are devoted towards planning and executing one episode? **Estimated production time: Production takes between 5 – 20 days depending on the episode. On average production takes close to 24 hrs.**
 - h. What were the start-up costs (i.e. – costs to purchasing equipment)? **We did not have start-up costs since we already had the equipment needed to produce the episodes. All people involved in the production of the podcast are employees and part of the DCO team. Those who want to participate in the podcast as an extension of their work duties, have the option to do so, but no one is required.**
- Do you track metrics, specifically the number of listeners or downloads?
 - a. **Yes**
- If yes, please share more? (Aggregate across syndicators)
 - **Subscribers: 1105**
 - **Monthly listeners: 360**
 - **Monthly impressions (includes social media impressions): 2500**
 - **Average session duration: 18 minutes**
 - **Average episode length: 24 minutes**
- Can you share any advice, or words of wisdom, about producing a podcast? **If you can justify paid advertising for your episode, do so. Organic growth is rather slow.**

Delaware Senate Majority Caucus

The two-man Delaware Senate comms team does not produce a podcast, although the five-person House comms team does.

Delaware House Majority Caucus

- Does your legislature/caucus/chamber produce a podcast?

Yes

- If yes, please share the following:
 - a. Name of podcast - **Whip Count**

- b. Link to podcast - plnk.to/WhipCount
(Apple: <https://podcasts.apple.com/podcast/id1466127935?at=1466127935>)
 - c. The year the podcast was started - **2019**
 - d. Frequency of episodes (i.e. – new episode every month, etc.) - **New episodes weekly when in session, periodic when on recess.**
 - e. Number of total episodes since inception - **50**
- What resources (both time and money) are devoted to the podcast?
 - d. How many staff support the production of the podcast? - **Two staff alternate recording episodes. The entire team of five discusses ideas and contributes to the overall effort.**
 - e. How many hours of staff time are devoted towards planning and executing one episode? - **It varies. If we're able to do a group interview, it might take 5-6 hours start to finish to record, edit, upload, publish and promote. If we have to do individual interviews and do a lot of editing, it could take 10 hours.**
 - f. What were the start-up costs (i.e. – costs to purchasing equipment)? - **We started small until we developed a routine, and then we invested more heavily into it. We've purchased snowball mics (\$30 each), a roundtable (\$200), tablecloth, foam soundproofing tiles, a Marantz recorder, field mic and subscriptions to software (Podbean is our hosting site).**
 - Do you track metrics, specifically the number of listeners or downloads?
Yes
 - If yes, please share more? **We get about 100-200 listeners per episode (it's a small state), but we receive a good amount of positive feedback. We also use sound bites from episodes as audiograms on social media to maximize the effort and increase our overall reach.**
 - Can you share any advice, or words of wisdom, about producing a podcast? **Do your homework ahead of time, try to find a voice, and commit to producing a handful of episodes before you start. Having 4-5 in the can before you start really helps get you off the ground. Find topics you enjoy. Commit to promoting the podcast via social media -- if you're going to put in the time, you need to make sure people are listening. Most of all, have fun with it! If you aren't enjoying it, it will show in the quality of the episodes.**

Georgia House

To answer your question below, the Georgia House of Representatives/House Media Services does not have an official podcast. I am not sure if either caucus offers their own podcast, so I can't answer for them. However, different a few Georgia-based news outlets offer their own podcasts about the legislature and state politics.

Illinois Senate

- Does your legislature/caucus/chamber produce a podcast?

- a. **Yes**
- If yes, please share the following:
 - a. Name of podcast -- **Sound of the State**
 - b. Link to podcast -- <https://www.spreaker.com/user/ilsendems>
 - c. The year the podcast was started – **2018, on Soundcloud (since deleted)**
 - d. Frequency of episodes (i.e. – new episode every month, etc.) – **We have a number of concurrently running types of episodes, including a “daily” (depending on number of available and wide-scale relevant press releases) episode M-F, which is a 5-7 minute “newscast” style episode, as well as random member / issue episodes, which are published 3-4 times per month.**
 - e. Number of total episodes since inception - **I don’t have an accurate figure for this, at this time, given that a number of our early episodes would have been on our since-deleted Soundcloud.**
- What resources (both time and money) are devoted to the podcast?
 - i. How many staff support the production of the podcast? – **I am the sole voice and audio producer of our podcasts, but we do have a video and graphics team which we’ve recently organized into a “podcast team.” Altogether, there are four of us, plus the oversight handled by our Communications Director.**
 - j. How many hours of staff time are devoted towards planning and executing one episode? – **It depends on the type of episode. I can plan, record, and edit the daily “newscast” episodes in about 30 minutes. The other types can take a few days.**
 - k. What were the start-up costs (i.e., costs to purchasing equipment)? – **Our monthly cost for Spreaker is \$20 (so, \$240 per year). One of my predecessors was able to get a Neumann TLM 127 microphone approved (no longer produced, but was about \$1,800 new. I run that microphone through a dbx28s processor, which currently retails for about \$225. I have a number of handheld Shure SM58 microphones (\$100 each) that are used for members and other guests on the podcast). Finally, the processor feeds into a FocusRite Scarlett 18i20 3rd Generation USB audio interface (\$550), which routes everything into my PC.**
- Do you track metrics, specifically the number of listeners or downloads?
 - a. **Yes, but are currently only using the basic metrics available through our Spreaker account. We do not have any way of being able to track listeners or downloads on the other platforms to which Spreaker automatically distributes, such as Pandora, Spotify, the iHeartRadio app, Apple Podcasts, etc.**

Illinois House Democratic Caucus

Does your legislature/caucus/chamber produce a podcast? **We have been considering starting a podcast for the last few months, but haven't been convinced yet that this would be a good ROI in terms of the staff time and staff/legislator prep work that would go into producing these. We've not yet completely eliminated it as an option but have been hesitant.**

Indiana House Democratic Caucus

No.

Nebraska Legislature

Our communications office briefly discussed the possibility this session, but determined that we lack the time, resources and expertise to produce something that would add value to the print and web content that we currently provide. We may revisit the question this interim but have decided against it for now.

Utah Senate

No.

Washington House Democratic Caucus

- Does your legislature/caucus/chamber produce a podcast?
Yes
- If yes, please share the following:
 - b. Name of podcast **Capitol Ideas: The Washington State House Democratic Caucus Podcast**
 - c. Link to podcast <http://radiocuts.leg.wa.gov/capitolideas.aspx>
 - d. The year the podcast was started **2009**
 - e. Frequency of episodes (i.e. – new episode every month, etc.) **Varies, depending**
 - f. Number of total episodes since inception ~ **100**
- What resources (both time and money) are devoted to the podcast?
 - l. How many staff support the production of the podcast? **One**
 - m. How many hours of staff time are devoted towards planning and executing one episode? **Varies, but it is a time-intensive process. Just editing the “uhs” and “you knows” out of a 20-minute interview can take hours. Before that point you’ve got to have an idea, then decide who to interview (assuming that is your format), send and receive an infinite number of emails to arrange the interview, do the research necessary to ask good questions, record the interview, record intro and outro, mix the full podcast, create the RSS feed, hit the send button. It takes some time.**
 - n. What were the start-up costs (i.e. – costs to purchasing equipment)? **Negligible for us; we use the same equipment for other products.**
- Do you track metrics, specifically the number of listeners or downloads?
No
- Can you share any advice, or words of wisdom, about producing a podcast? **Decide what you want to accomplish with a podcast, then design the product to accomplish that. Keep it short, keep it positive, keep it honest, avoid partisanship, avoid whining, make it interesting, make it personal. Strive for a casual but professional-sounding product, with broadcast-quality audio. Promote it widely, because the chances of someone discovering it by just stumbling upon it are virtually non-existent. And even though I don’t have a set schedule, I’d recommend having one and sticking to it.**

Washington, D.C.

Our podcast consists of my one-on-one interviews with individual councilmembers. The show started out as (and remains) a radio show on our municipal government radio station, but since April 2018, we've also sent it out as a podcast. Initial interviews with each councilmember are biographical, but especially since COVID, subsequent interviews have been more policy-focused. All CMs have sat for at least one interview. Some have now done 6 each!

Answers in-line below, happy to add more detail if needed.

1. Does your legislature/caucus/chamber produce a podcast?
Yes
2. If yes, please share the following:
 - a. Name of podcast: **"Hearing the Council"**
 - b. Link to podcast: **apple.co/3nSgZEM**
 - c. The year the podcast was started: **2018**
 - d. Frequency of episodes (i.e. – new episode every month, etc.): **Based on councilmember availability, so unpredictable (4 in the past month)**
 - e. Number of total episodes since inception: **59**
3. What resources (both time and money) are devoted to the podcast?: **Zero money, time mainly is prep/research**
 - f. How many staff support the production of the podcast? **1 (plus editing help from municipal radio station staff)**
 - g. How many hours of staff time are devoted towards planning and executing one episode? **5**
 - h. What were the start-up costs (i.e. – costs to purchasing equipment)?: **None (but this is unusual because pre-COVID episodes were recorded at our municipal radio station, and since COVID they're done via Zoom on a laptop)**
4. Do you track metrics, specifically the number of listeners or downloads?
YES
5. If yes, please share more? **Nearly 10,000 listens**
6. Can you share any advice, or words of wisdom, about producing a podcast? **Keep it casual, interesting, even a bit edgy—no one wants to listen to an infomercial.**

Wisconsin Assembly Democrats

1. Our caucus started our podcast on July 24, 2019, with the aim of recording episodes every other week to two weeks. We took a brief hiatus during the pandemic and have readjusted to a monthly format to accommodate our members and their needs as our members transition to in-person interactions. There are 30 episodes as of May 7, 2021.
2. The goal of this podcast is to highlight policy projects the Assembly Democrats are working on and legislative goals for the future--a number of notable guests include Governor Tony Evers, cabinet secretaries, and members of our Democratic federal delegation (Sen. Baldwin, Rep. Moore, and Rep. Pocan).

Podcast Link: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/some-assembly-required/id1474139892>

3. The podcast is supported by staff here in the Assembly Democratic Leader's office, including booking, outline drafting, recording, and audio editing. Prior to the pandemic, episodes were recorded in the video studio which is located in the capitol basement. We transitioned to recording over Zoom during the pandemic.
4. Yes, we track metrics, specifically in relation to viewership.

Wyoming

No.

The producer of NCSL's podcast, [Our American States](#), also responded and below is his feedback with things to consider/think about:

- What are the topics?
- Who is the audience?
- What is the purpose?
- Resources – is it a one-person show? do you have one person who can do multiple things?
- What does it cost?
 - Will you utilize an outside firm or contractor?
 - How much does an outside firm or contractor cost?
- What software subscriptions?
- Is there a host?
- What metrics are you trying to achieve?
- How much effort (cost, staff time, etc.) are you willing to put into a podcast?

Information specific to NCSL's podcast:

- Podcasts are targeted for legislators and staff under 50 years old.
- Podcasts are kept under 30 minutes long.
- In the beginning, the podcast showcased more legislators – not as many now.
 - Now there is more of a focus on experts to educate legislators.
- How and why you do the podcast may morph over time.
- During the pandemic, the podcast was a great way to get information out there regarding areas around the pandemic.
- The podcast is used to compliment the other materials that NCSL puts out to members.