



NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES

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In June 2020, NCSL compiled information regarding spokesperson duties in the legislatures. Below are the questions asked after surveying LINCOS:

- Does your chamber or caucus have a designated spokesperson who speaks to the press?
- If not, are any staff asked to speak to the press on behalf of members?
 - Yes, on a regular basis
 - Yes, as the occasion demands
 - If yes, what position fills this role?
 - No

Shown below is a summary of the responses.

Arkansas House

Does your chamber or caucus have a designated spokesperson who speaks to the press? Yes
If not, are any staff asked to speak to the press on behalf of members?

- Yes, on a regular basis
- Yes, as the occasion demands
- If yes, what position fills this role? The chief information officer oversees the communications department but does not speak for individual members, though occasionally for the speaker. He or she also handles information requests and inquiries from the press about procedure, schedules and policies.
- No

Delaware

For our caucus, we do not have a designated spokesperson, per se. The communications director talks to the press regularly but almost exclusively in an off-the-record or on-background manner. The legislators speak for themselves, whether in live interviews or statements.

It's not quite as cut-and-dried as yes/no for us, but the answer would generally be "no." The communications director has spoken to the press on the record but could count on two hands and one foot the number of times over the past 11 years.

Hawaii Senate

- Does your chamber or caucus have a designated spokesperson who speaks to the press?
Yes, the communications director.

- If not, are any staff asked to speak to the press on behalf of members?
Generally, staff do not speak to the press. However, each senator is entitled to empower her office manager to speak to the press if necessary.

Illinois

Yes.

In Illinois, each of the caucus leaders has a designated spokesperson.

Media relations are a primary responsibility for the spokesman for the Office of the Illinois Senate President.

The Senate Republican leader has a spokesperson with similar responsibilities.

Indiana House

The Indiana House Democratic Caucus' primary spokesperson is the communications director. The director also authorizes the communications assistants on the team to speak to the press on behalf of members they are assigned to cover. No other staff are authorized to speak to the press.

Indiana Senate

Typically, the president pro tempore speaks on behalf of the caucus during session on a weekly basis. Press secretaries speak to the media on the record only on rare occasions when directed by the senator.

Maine

The Legislative Information Office, which is a nonpartisan resource to visitors and legislators alike.

The office does not speak to the press other than to provide them standard public reports should they ask.

Nebraska

Since we don't have caucuses and only have one chamber, there really isn't a designated spokesperson for the entire institution. Most press inquiries about the legislature are directed to the Speaker's Office, and the speaker handles those himself. Each of the 49 members speaks on his or her own behalf.

New Mexico

No.

North Carolina Senate

The Senate leader speaks on behalf of the caucus on a regular basis. His spokesperson handles most media inquiries and speaks on the record on behalf of the caucus on occasion. We have 29 members (of 50 total) in our caucus.

Ohio

From the minority director of communications: "Yes, I am the designated spokesperson for the Ohio House Minority Caucus. I am the first point of contact for most statewide media and typically help connect the reporters with the best member who can answer their questions. However, sometimes I speak on the record on behalf of the caucus but only occasionally when the situation calls for it."

Oregon Legislature

Does your chamber or caucus have a designated spokesperson who speaks to the press? Yes.

Rhode Island

The House and the Senate each have a communications director for each of the caucuses who speaks to the media, generally on behalf of leadership but occasionally on behalf of other members after conferring with them. They are full-time employees who communicate with the media regularly, with communications duties beyond spokesperson duties.

Utah House

From the minority communications specialist: "In my role as communications specialist for the Utah House Democrats, I do not speak to the press on behalf of our caucus members in an official on-camera capacity. Most of my role is coordinating with members of the media so that caucus members can speak directly for themselves. That said, I do talk to press members off the record for background."

Washington, D.C.

Each elected official has his or her own press/communications staffer; there is not a designated staffer who speaks on behalf of the entire council. The overall council has a communications director who serves in a role more closely resembling that of an information officer than a spokesperson.

Most of the comms directors will prepare the members and conduct research. The members will then speak directly to the press, or the comms director will submit a statement to the press on the member's behalf.

Washington State

If someone speaks on behalf of the caucus, it typically will be the majority leader. In addition, specific lawmakers will speak to the press in their area of expertise, either as chair of a committee or as sponsor of a bill in question. The communications director handles informational queries for the benefit of the press but not for public release.

Staff regularly speak with the press but only to provide background information or explanations of bills or policies, never for attribution. Anything for attribution must always come from a lawmaker. Comms staff may do this often; policy staff will do it more intermittently, as the occasion demands.

West Virginia

Generally, the communications directors for the House and Senate, respectively, help coordinate media inquiries, as well as staff for the minority caucuses in each chamber. No other staff are generally asked to speak to media or help facilitate media inquiries.

The communications director for the House of Delegates is the designated media point of contact for the House and serves as a spokesman for the speaker or House majority leadership. For delegates not on the leadership team, the director puts people into direct contact with the delegates and arranges interview logistics or helps draft releases or statements. The minority caucus also has a policy analyst who sends out press releases and statements on behalf of delegates in that caucus.

Wisconsin

The communications director for Speaker Robin Vos is the designated spokesperson for the speaker, leadership and caucus. Legislative aides rarely speak on behalf of their representative.

Wyoming Legislative Service Office

- No.
- No. Legislative information officers on our staff regularly provide general and procedural information about the legislature to the press but do not speak on behalf of members.