Greetings, everyone! I’d like to take this opportunity to introduce myself to all of our LINCS members around the country, both new and old. My name is Tim Bommel, and I am your new LINCS chair for the 2018-2019 year.

I live and work in Missouri, where I serve with the Missouri House of Representatives Communications staff as the photojournalist, and have done so for the past 23 years. Before that, I was involved in local studio/commercial photography, as well as serving in the Missouri National Guard as a photojournalist for several years.

I’ve been truly blessed in that time, and NCSL is one of the most amazing organizations in which I’ve had the privilege to participate. When I first decided to join the ranks of NCSL and LINCS, it was originally to network and glean practices and procedures specific to my job, to increase my knowledge.

But at some point along the way, I realized that I was actually the old grizzled veteran with knowledge to share. And my goal for this year is to help facilitate and create opportunities for each of us to share and learn in every aspect of the communications community. The benefits of sharing everyday technical skills such as videography, photography and audio recording continue to be the foundation within our organization. Having the opportunity to meet and to share information with so many professional legislative staff members from around the country is such a blessing, and I encourage everyone to visit, connect and share throughout the entire year.

I have worked in a nonpartisan office throughout my entire legislative career, but I realize that not all of our association members do so. Some serve in partisan or joint legislative offices, but my hope is to help create outreach and opportunities for ALL staff to connect with those who may share similar responsibilities and duties.

During our last PDS in Lexington, Ky., and through our follow-up polls, one of the most common comments made was the desire for opportunities to connect, meet and talk more through roundtables and other formats of discussion. We will continue to look forward to new ways to facilitate that, as well as present information through the newest platforms and mediums, such as social media, podcasts and webinars. I would like to address these challenges and opportunities in our upcoming PDS.

As we continue to build on the progress that so many people that have served before me have made, I would like to give a big shout out to Jeff Fossett, K’Lynn Sloan, Dennis Yoder and so many others.

This organization has grown because of the input of each and every one of you. It’s through that communication we have been able to share with one another. I look forward to hearing from each of you and also seeing everyone in Kansas City for our 2019 Professional Development Seminar.

Tim Bommel
Missouri House of Representatives

SAVE THE DATE FOR LINCS’ FALL PDS!

OCT. 23-25, 2019 | KANSAS CITY, MO
Meet Your 2019 LINCS Executive Committee

Chair—Tim Bommel, Missouri, tim.bommel@house.mo.gov
Tim has been serving as the staff photojournalist for the Missouri House of Representa-
tives for nearly 20 years. His goal is to inform the public through journalistic, group,
portrait and constituent photography. Prior to that he was employed for 15 years as a
studio, wedding and commercial photographer. During that time he was also a mem-
ber of the Missouri Army National Guard as a photojournalist.

Vice Chair—Betsy Theroux, Georgia, betsy.theroux@house.ga.gov
Betsy is the director of Media Services for the Georgia House of Representatives. Betsy
joined the House staff in January 2012 as a session assistant and then served as depu-
ty member press secretary, member press secretary and interim director of communica-
tions. In 2015, Lynch was elected by the members of the House to serve as the House
messenger for the 2015-2016 term, and was re-elected in 2017 for the 2017-2018 term.
Lynch holds a bachelor’s degree in communications and a bachelor’s minor in Spanish
from the University of Georgia.

Director—Alison Kniker, Texas, alison.kniker@texas.senate.gov
As broadcast manager for the Texas Senate’s Media Services department, Alison supports
31 individual senators and the Texas Senate with their video and television needs. She
oversees the equipment and personnel who provide the public a front-row view of official
Senate business in the Capitol and around the state. Alison’s experience includes commu-
nications, public relations and television production with corporate, independent and gov-
ernment clientele. She has traversed six continents as an independent shoreside videogra-
pher and shipboard broadcast manager with a global cruise line.

Secretary—Beth Livingston, Ohio, beth.ford@ohiosenate.gov
Beth is the member communications manager and deputy press secretary for the Ohio
Senate. Beth joined the Senate staff in January 2017, after working in public relations
and advancement roles in higher education. Responsible for analyzing the communica-
tions needs for 25 members of the Senate’s majority caucus, Beth works to develop
policy messaging and communications strategies for effective internal and external
communications across a variety of platforms. Livingston holds a bachelor’s in public
relations from Lee University in Cleveland, Tenn.

Immediate Past Chair—Jeff Fossett, Kentucky, jeff.fossett@lrc.ky.gov
Jeff is video communications specialist for the Kentucky Legislative Research Com-
mision, where he has worked since 1993. He has extensive experience in television
news, working as a reporter, videographer and assistant news director for visual con-
tent. He received his bachelor’s degree in telecommunications from the University of
Kentucky, where he was a cheerleader and cheerleading coach. Jeff is a husband,
father and grandfather, and serves as a high school and college volleyball referee in
his spare time.
Director—Will Tracy, Arkansas, will.tracy@arkansashouse.org
Will Tracy is a production assistant with the Arkansas House of Representatives. He is involved in all aspects of the audio/visual communications team, specializing in video content and overall video streaming operations for committee and general session meetings. Will holds a bachelor’s degree in mass communications with a minor in film studies. His 10-plus years of production experience has taken him from local school plays all the way to California film sets. Will enjoys spending time with his family and is an avid home brewer and tennis player.

Director—Jim Hannah, Kentucky, jim.hannah@lrc.ky.gov
As a nonpartisan public information specialist for Kentucky’s Legislative Research Commission, Jim’s primary responsibility is to communicate the message of the state’s 38 senators through media outlets. This includes drafting press releases, columns and speeches. Prior to joining the commission in 2014, Jim spent 17 years as a daily newspaper reporter, including one year as a copy editor for Shanghai Daily and over a decade as a cops reporter for The Cincinnati Enquirer. He studied journalism at Western Kentucky University. Jim enjoys canoeing and tasting the locally distilled bourbon.

Director—Tayleranne Gillespie, Oregon, tayleranne.gillespie@oregonlegislature.gov
Tayleranne is the communications director for the Oregon Senate Minority Office. She has worked for the caucus since 2015 in various roles and has been the communications director since November 2017. Prior to her time in the caucus office, Tayleranne worked for the Oregon Secretary of the Senate as a Senate page, and has worked on various campaigns in Oregon. Tayleranne has a bachelor’s degree in political science with a minor in communications from Western Oregon University.

Greetings LINCSters!

We hope your sessions are going well. Please remember to turn to NCSL for any help you need to excel in your job. Here are a few things that might interest you:

LINCS sponsored a webinar on “The Power of Podcasting” in December. NCSL sponsors several webinars a month on a variety of topics. Check the Calendar and Archive webpage to see what’s coming up and to listen to past webinars.

Listen to NCSL’s podcast, “Our American States,” for interesting discussions about the topics being tackled in state legislatures across the country.

Stay tuned for details about the LINCS and NALIT 2019 Online Democracy Award, which recognizes outstanding state legislative websites, and start thinking about who you’d like to nominate for the Legislative Staff Achievement Award. In the meantime, give a shout-out to a colleague by visiting this webpage—it’s easy and fun!

Please feel free to contact Jane Carroll Andrade, jane.andrade@ncsl.org, 303-856-1464, or Holly South, holly.south@ncsl.org, 856-1495, to ask questions or share ideas!
Kentucky Public Information Office Takes on Internal Communications

By Jim Hannah
Kentucky Legislative Research Commission public information specialist and LINCS director

FRANKFORT, Ky.—The historic mission of the nonpartisan Public Information Office at the Kentucky Legislative Research Commission was to shine the spotlight on lawmakers’ work. While that is still true, the staff is now tasked with internal communications.

“It was a real cultural shift,” said Public Information Manager Rob Weber.

The office traditionally educated the public about the General Assembly, its activities and the legislative process. It did that, in part, by assisting legislators in keeping their constituents informed with news releases, columns, speeches, photographs, and audio and video mediums.

The change meant the office’s nine full-time employees were also responsible for producing a daily employee email, bimonthly employee newsletter and monthly employee spotlight. That was in addition to providing content for a closed-circuit informational channel dubbed LegislatV and a YouTube channel called LRC Capitol Connections. For two years, the office also helped write the copy for the agency’s annual report.

“It added to our workload, which was already heavy at times, so that took an adjustment,” Weber said.

Photographer Supervisor Bruce Phillips said that the new mission required a different mindset. After years of avoiding photographing agency employees, the staff photographers were suddenly being asked to capture them interacting with lawmakers. Photographs of the staff were needed to fill all the new internal communication mediums.

“It definitely was a different focus,” Phillips said, “and it took a while for us to make that adjustment.”

The impetus for the change was the hiring of David Byerman as the agency’s director in the fall of 2015. Byerman, who now serves as an adviser to the commission, said one of his priorities was to improve internal communication among the agency’s roughly 400 employees.

He said the annual report had a non-traditional purpose because it was specifically targeted to Kentucky lawmakers and the agency’s staff. Byerman said that helped, in part, solve an age-old conundrum of not taking the public spotlight off lawmakers while highlighting the good work of their staff.

“The legislators are the star of the show, but at the same time, legislative staffers do incredible work on a regular basis and they deserve to be recognized for that work,” Byerman said. “On the one hand, you want to make sure you have the legislators front and center in your news coverage. On the other hand, it is vitally important to find ways to celebrate the successes of the staff.”

Weber said the internal communications efforts focus on the agency’s mission of contributing to the greater good of society. “Everyone contributes to that mission in their own ways,” he said. “We try to highlight that.”

Byerman said internal communications is important in attracting the next generation of legislative staffers. Next-gen employees do not necessarily want to work for the most relentlessly successful company anymore, he said. Their loyalty comes from feeling good about the work they do.

“As the end of the day, you need to give people as much compensation as you can for doing the job,” Byerman said. “Compensation takes different forms. Compensation is the paycheck you earn … but it is also making sure that people know they are appreciated, that their work is recognized. There are only so many ways to do that, and I think public information staff has the ability to do that.”

He said internal communication efforts are not dependent on large or well-funded state legislative staffs.

“You don’t have to have a public information team to make this happen, be successful,” Byerman said. “This can be done, in this day and age, where you have website creation tools and graphic design programs that are pretty intuitive. It is possible to do this kind of work without having extensive resources.”

Weber said the internal communication efforts have been incorporated into the public information office workflow and well received by staff and lawmakers.

“People love being informed,” he said.
Learning With LINCS

LINCS ters gather in person twice a year—once at the NCSL Legislative Summit and once at the annual fall professional development seminar. Please join us—we network, learn and laugh a lot, and enjoy the camaraderie of professionals who do what we do in state legislatures across the country.

At Legislative Summit in LA

LINCS sponsored sessions on writing and digital signage and held a networking breakfast and happy hour meetup at last year’s Summit in Los Angeles.

From left, LINCS sponsor Rob Stoddard of NCTA, LINCS Chair Tim Bommel of Missouri, former LINCS Chair Cory Steward of Louisiana, NCSL LINCS Liaison Jane Carroll Andrade, LINCS Director Tayleranne Gillespie of Oregon, LINCS ter Tim Powers of Alaska and former LINCS Secretary Lauren Russell of Louisiana.

At LINCS PDS in Kentucky

A HUGE thank you to Jeff Fossett and his team, who helped make the 2018 PDS in Lexington, Ky., a winner! Highlights included sessions on podcasting, crisis communications, an inside look at a Pulitzer Prize-winning multimedia piece about heroin, civil discourse, the state of modern media, and more—all complimented by tours of the State Capitol, Buffalo Trace Distillery and Keeneland. For those wanting a refresher or who were unable to attend, check out resources from the meeting, along with a few photos, including one of LINCS ters in their awesome custom shirts at the State Capitol in Frankfurt.
April 5, 2019
Deadline to submit content for
The Voice Spring issue

August 5-8, 2019
NCSL 2019 Legislative Summit in Nashville

Oct. 23-25, 2019
LINCS annual Professional Development Seminar,
Kansas City, Mo.

LINCS is deeply grateful to Rob Stoddard and NCTA—The Internet & Television Association, for their ongoing friendship and support of legislative communicators in the laboratories of democracy.